BENNETT, COLEMAN & CO. LTD. | Estd. 1838 | VOL. 43 NO.95 BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026 | METRO | PAGES 32 | PRICE ₹5*

THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 6 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND 2 PAGES OF TIMES SCHOOL

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Abhishek Sharma hammers listless Delhi Capitals into submission **with a brilliant 68-ball 135 not out** as Sunrisers Hyderabad (242/2) canter to an easy 47-run victory, P 19

Labour secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer is out of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, White House says, after multiple allegations of misusing her position, including having an affair with a subordinate and drinking alcohol on the job, P 16

Pakistan receives final $1 billion tranche of a $3bn support package from Saudi Arabia, shoring up its foreign exchange reserves after UAE declines to roll over its debt

French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz insists that he would rather miss defending his Roland Garros title in May than rush treatment on a 'serious' wrist injury, P 20

Govt staffer dies of suspected heatstroke in NK

North Karnataka recorded its second suspected heatstroke-related death of the season on Tuesday. Venkatesh Ballari, 35, chief officer of Chinchali town panchayat in Belagavi district, collapsed while performing a puja at a Basaveshwara Jayanti event Monday. He was rushed to a hospital, but doctors were unable to revive him. Preliminary reports suggest that he died of a heatstroke. The govt has placed all district and taluk hospitals on high alert. P 3

TOI HEALTH+

Nagging neck & back pain? It may be overnight sleep strain

Why holding a pose is good for your blood pressure

Does consuming matcha daily cause anaemia?

+ much more on P 13

Bengal poll list with added names today

EC will add the names approved by SIR tribunals to Bengal's electoral roll till Tuesday midnight and issue an updated list on Wednesday for the 152 assembly seats that will go to the polls in the first phase on April 23, the chief electoral officer said. P 7

B'luru may have 1cr 2-wheelers by 2029

More and more Bengalureans are opting for two-wheelers as a quick fix for commuting woes, with around 1,400 new bikes added each day. From 50L in 2017, the vehicle volume may reach one crore by 2029. P 2

4 injured in Germany gurdwara clash

Four people were injured after a clash broke out at a gurdwara in Germany's Moers city on Sunday. Altercation was between members of two groups of the Sikh community during a festival there. P 16

Pak extends airspace closure till May 24

Pakistan on Tuesday extended the closure of its airspace for Indian planes till May 24. In the wake of the terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22 last year, India and Pakistan have closed their respective airspaces for each other's planes. PTI

Know Namma Karnataka?

SCAN THE O!

Scan the QR & answer the quiz question. Correct answer will be revealed tomorrow!

*T&C Apply

Yesterday's answer: Cotton

Vance trip to Pak put on hold after Tehran snubs US terms

Trump Threatens To Resume Bombing Iran

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

With the two-week ceasefire coming to an end Wednesday, hopes of an end to the US-Iran war seemed elusive amid reports citing an American official saying that vice-president J D Vance's trip to Islamabad for a second round of talks had been put on hold after Tehran failed to respond to American positions.

Earlier on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said he expects to achieve "a great deal" with Iran after a second round of talks, while at the same time saying he also "expects" to return to bombing if the mission does not succeed.

Iran had also not yet made a decision, foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei told Iranian state TV while host nation Pakistan said it was in constant touch with Iranians.

In a series of often contradictory remarks in more than a half dozen interviews over 48 hours, the latest one a phone-in with CNBC, Trump blew hot and cold, sometimes lambasting Iran and sometimes praising it, as he sought to alternately bully and cajole Tehran into turning up in Islamabad. "Iran can get themselves in a very good footing if they make a deal. They can make themselves into a strong nation again, a wonderful nation again. They have incredible people... But they seem to be bloodthirsty, led by extremely (negatively) tough people," he rambled in the CNBC interview.

FULL COVERAGE: P 14, 16

▶Voiced concern, P 16

US IMPOSES NEW SANCTIONS

Photo: Reuters

Mhamed (34) and Taline (2.5) ride past damaged buildings in Lebanon

- US imposes new Iran-related sanctions, including **on individuals and companies** linked to trading and air travel
- Pentagon's **largest-ever budget request** earmarks $75bn for drones, air defence systems and fighters being used in the war
- **Trump calls on Iran to release 6 women and 2 teen girls** facing prosecution. Iran's judiciary denies they face death sentences

US seizes tanker with Iranian oil in Bay of Bengal

US forces have boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia, the Pentagon said Tuesday, as it puts into place a global warning to track down vessels tied to Tehran. The Tifani, a "Botswana-flagged tanker", was captured in the Bay of Bengal and was carrying Iranian oil, according to a US defence official.

The US military will decide in the next four days what to do with the vessel, such as tow it back to the US or turn it over to another country, the official said. Iran's foreign ministry described the boarding of the tanker, as well as the seizure of a separate cargo ship on Sunday, as "piracy at sea and state terrorism". Trump said US forces intercepted a ship carrying a "gift" to Iran from China. P 16

'2 accused locals could have averted Apr 22 terror attack'

'Duo Who Sheltered Ultras Knew Strike Was Imminent'

Bharti.Jain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Two Kashmiri locals, in jail in the Pahalgam attack case for allegedly harbouring three Pakistani terrorists a night before the incident, could have easily prevented the mayhem of April 22, 2025, and saved 26 civilians from being gunned down in front of families, sources said.

Around 12.30pm on the fateful day, hours before the massacre, Parvaiz Ahmad and Bashir Ahmad Jothad had spotted the three terrorists — identified as Faisal Jatt alias Suleman Shah, Habeeb Tahir alias Jibran and Hamza Afghani — hiding behind a fence at Baisaran. The attackers had visited the homes of Bashir and Parvaiz only the evening before — during which they talked in an accented Urdu-Punjabi mix. They were carrying sophisticated weapons and spoke of Ali Bhai (alias used by key accused Sajid Jatt, a top Lashker-e-Taiba/The Resistance Front commander, belonging to Pakistan's Kasur area).

Sources said it was amply clear to the duo that a terror attack was imminent.

Pahalgam ONE YEAR LATER

FULL COVERAGE: P 12

ANI

A tourist couple in Pahalgam on the eve of the attack's 1st anniversary

▶Duo chose silence, P 12

Kharge refers to PM Modi as 'terrorist', BJP seeks apology

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Congress president **Mallikarjun Kharge** sparked a row after he referred to PM Modi as a "terrorist", with senior BJP politicians reacting sharply and demanding an unconditional apology from the octogenarian leader.

▶ BJP urges EC to take 'penal action' against Kharge, P 12

The row started when Kharge criticised AIADMK for aligning with BJP, arguing that the move undermined the principles of Dravidian icons EV R Periyar and CN Annadurai. "How can they (AIADMK) join with Modi? He is a terrorist. He is one who doesn't believe in equality. His party doesn't believe in equality or justice. By joining them, these people are weakening democracy and the philosophy of Periyar, Anna, Dr Ambedkar and Kalaignar (M Karunanidhi)," Kharge told the media in Chennai on the final day of campaigning for the April 23 elections.

▶ 'Humiliated Indians', P 10

Maha, UP lead in PNG sign-ups after govt push

New Delhi: Maharashtra, UP, Gujarat, Delhi and Haryana have seen the highest number of new PNG registrations and activation of old connections since March, when the govt pushed to expand piped gas supply across the country to ease pressure on LPG cylinder supply due to ongoing West Asia crisis, **reports Atul Mathur.**

Of the more than 4.7 lakh dormant connections activated (till April 16), over one-fourth (1.2 lakh) were in Maharashtra, followed by more than a fifth (1 lakh) in UP.

▶ 10% extra LPG, P 10

Enough proof against Justice Varma: Advocates

Advocates assisting the Justice Aravind Kumar Committee inquiring into discovery of huge amount of unaccounted cash at Justice Yashwant Varma's house last March on Tuesday said the evidence produced during the proceedings was enough to substantiate the charge, which was one of the grounds cited in the removal motion against him.

Senior advocates R B Thakare and Aishwarya Bhati called Justice Varma's April 9 letter withdrawing from proceedings as an "attempt to construct a narrative of procedural unfairness where none exists, made at the stage when the judge was called upon to answer the charges on merits, knowing well that tendering the resignation would bring an end to these proceedings." P 12

DANCE of DEMOCRACY

Photo: IANS

TN deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin during a rally in Chennai. Campaigning for TN and Bengal phase 1 polls ended Tuesday, ushering in the 48-hour 'silent period' ahead of April 23 polling | P 7

- Hours after ordering **blanket ban on movement of 2-wheelers** before each phase of Bengal polls to curb voter intimidation, **EC modifies circular after facing flak from citizens.** 'Essential services and emergency services have been granted exemption'
- **Shah promises 'solution' to concerns of Gorkha community** within 6 months if BJP assumes office in Bengal, vows to revive stalled Jindal Group steel project in Salboni 'at the earliest'; says **will seal B'desh borders within 45 days** of forming govt | P 7
- Shiv Sena (UBT) chief **Uddhav Thackeray slams BJP-led Centre,** voices support for Mamata: 'A **lone woman is fighting like a tigress**; she is bound to win. To defeat this single woman, over 200,000 CRPF personnel have been deployed... How is one supposed to vote?' | P 10
- **Kejriwal points to 'examples of dynastic politics in BJP',** refers to Amit Shah's son Jay and Rajnath Singh's son, says 'double-engine govts' have failed across the country
- **Gauhati HC directs Assam govt, CM Himanta to respond** by May 28 to bunch of PILs seeking action against him for **alleged hate speeches** against minority community | P 7
- K'taka Cong defers decision on disciplinary action against MLCs K Abdul Jabbar and Naseer Ahmed until bypoll results | P 4

Order on SSLC 3rd language stays: K'taka HC

In a setback to K'taka govt, HC on Tuesday refused to review its April 15 order, directing SSLC exam evaluation under existing rules. The govt had appealed against the directive, which would mean awarding marks, not grades, for third language in the SSLC exam. The bench presided over by Justice E S Indiresh took note of the fact that the new evaluation system was introduced after the exams. P 2

50 shades of anger? B'luru woman held for burning her lover alive at home

Bengaluru: In a fatal and gory turn to a BDSM session, a woman allegedly tied up her boyfriend, doused him in inflammable liquid and set him on fire at her residence in northwest Bengaluru on Tuesday. BDSM is an intimate activity that involves role play. It featured in the film 'Fifty Shades of Grey'. The woman has been arrested on murder charges.

Prema and Kiran, both 27, were colleagues at a mobile service provider store in Rajajinagar. They were allegedly in a relationship for two years.

Possibly out of resentment as Kiran had turned down her marriage proposal, Prema allegedly murdered him in Anjananagar in Byadarahalli station limits, police said. According to police, Prema invited Kiran, from Chikkanayakanahalli in Tumakuru district, home on Tuesday after her mother and brother left for work. Scrapping his plans to visit Nelamangala, Kiran went to meet her. TNN

PROMISED GOOD TIME

- **Prema** invites Kiran home on Tuesday. **Offers to give him a 'surprise' and a 'good time'**
- After **Kiran** arrives, she **blindfolds him, ties his hands and legs**
- Minutes later, Prema **pours an inflammable liquid and sets him ablaze**
- Cops say Prema **'recorded' Kiran's final moments on her phone,** which has been seized

▶Tied lover's hands, P 4

Court orders FIR against home min over ₹500 betting remark

Bengaluru: A Bengaluru court has ordered registration of an FIR against home minister G Parameshwara over an alleged betting remark. At a recent state-level PU kabaddi tournament held in Tumakuru, Dakshina Kannada defeated Vijayapura 36-26 in the boys' final.

After presenting the prize, Parameshwara jokingly said, "I lost Rs 500 — I had placed a bet with the DC that the Vijayapura team would win."

The 42nd additional chief judicial magistrate court directed police to initiate a probe following a private complaint filed by H R Nagabhushan.

The court also instructed Kodigehalli police in Tumakuru to conduct a detailed investigation. PTI

TTD plans to build ₹100cr Balaji temple in Belagavi

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Belagavi: Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams plan to build a Sri Venkateshwara temple on a seven-acre site near Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi to cater to devotees from North Karnataka, Goa and south Maharashtra. Construction is set to begin within a month and is expected to be completed in two years.

Addressing a press conference, TTD governing board member S Naresh Kumar said the project will cost about Rs 100 crore, with 80% funded by TTD, 10% by Reddy Sangha and the remaining 10% through public donations.

IN TWO YEARS

- Sri Venkateshwara temple construction **work to start in a month, completion in 2 years**
- The ₹100-cr project will come up on a **seven-acre site near Suvarna Vidhana Soudha**
- **TTD will fund 80%,** Reddy Sangha 10% and remaining 10% via public donations. **Land for temple has been donated** by Belagavi Reddy Sangha

The new temple will mirror the Tirupati shrine in design and rituals, with facilities such as accommodation, prasadam distribution and free round-the-clock meals.

▶Spiritual hub, P 4

Lifestyle diseases surge, infectious ailments fall

Shiva.Rajora@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Nearly half the population in India has reported cardio-vascular and metabolic ailments such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and thyroid, compared with 31% a decade ago.

PAN-INDIA SURVEY

The latest pan-India survey by National Statistics Office showed that in 2025, 25.6% of those surveyed reported cardio-vascular ailments, compared to 16.7% during July 2017 to June 2018.

Similarly, in the 15 days preceding the survey, 24.2% reported metabolic and endocrine ailments, against 15% in 2017-18. These non-communicable diseases are particularly higher in people over 45, indicating that these are related to lifestyle. In contrast, 15% people reported experiencing infections including ailments such as fever, jaundice and diarrhoea in 2025, down from 32% in 2017-18. Infections, however, still accounted for more than half of all ailments in children up to the age of 14.

Data from the survey, which covered nearly 1.4 lakh households, also showed that the share of Indians who reported being ill in the last 15 days has nearly doubled.

▶More women fall ill, P 7

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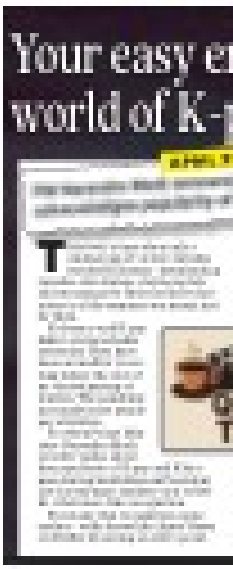
Bangalore Times

8-WEEK OTT WINDOW:

South producers form front against exhibitors' push

'I want to bring my OTT success to theatres too'



Your easy entry into the world of K-pop & dramas

Two-wheelers to hit 1cr mark in 3 yrs

RIDING ON Negotiating Traffic, Last-Mile Connectivity Weigh In Segment's Favour

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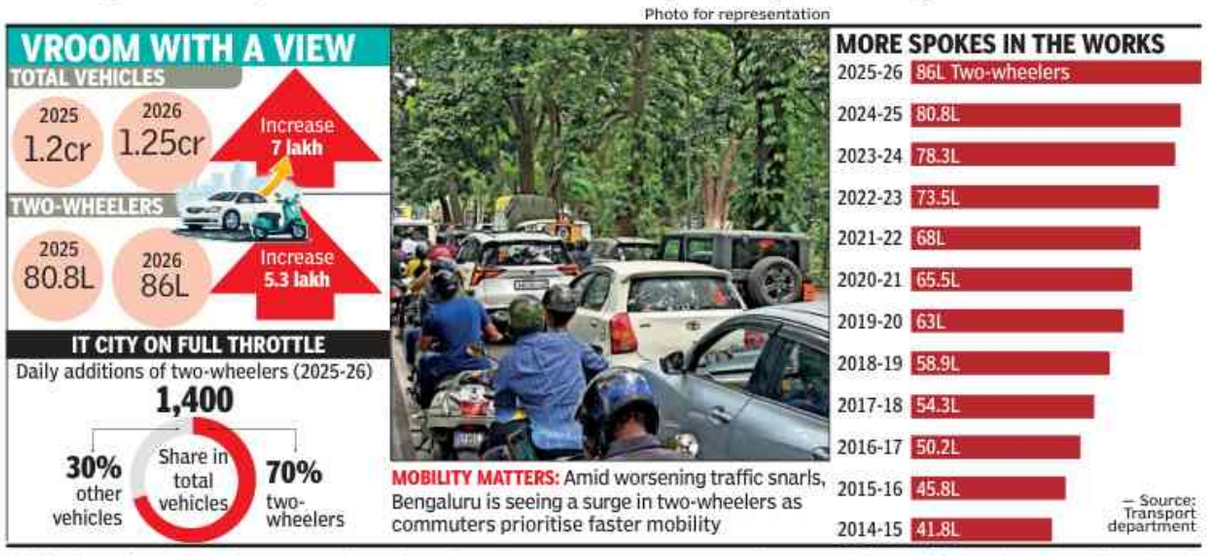

Bengaluru: With infrastructure upgrade and last-minute connectivity still in the works, and bumper-to-bumper traffic remaining the order of the day, more and more Bengalureans are turning to two-wheelers — the silver bullet for all commuting ills. This segment is growing on a tear with 1,400 new bikes and scooters hitting the road every day. Bengaluru could count one crore two-wheelers on its roads within three years.

While the city's two-wheelers hit the 50-lakh mark in 2017, the volume is set to double in under 12 years — adding an average of more than four lakh bikes every year. The scale of this growth is striking. During 2025–26, over 5.2 lakh two-wheelers were added, taking the total past 86 lakh (out of 1.2 crore vehicles overall).

This means two-wheelers now make up nearly 70% of Bengaluru's traffic — or, two of every three vehicles is a bike or a scooter. This firmly establishes two-wheelers as the backbone of daily commuting. Transport officials say the surge shows no signs of slowing down. Registrations grew by 6.5% compared to the previous year; monthly trends, too, reconfirm sharp spikes.

A senior transport department official said: "Going by the trend, Bengaluru will have more motorcycles and scooters within the next 2.5 years. Following GST rate reset, there was a noticeable spike in two-wheeler registrations. In the previous financial year, the highest number of new two-wheeler registrations (59,863) was recorded in Oct — an average of 1,931 vehicles a day. Jan 2026 saw the second highest, with the addition of 50,237 units. Over the years, Bengaluru has remained a strong market for this segment."

Not unexpectedly, several factors are driving this two-wheeler craze. High public transport costs, particularly on Namma Metro, have pushed many commuters towards bikes and scooters. For long commutes, a single passenger can end up spending close to Rs 200 per day on Metro travel alone. If a passenger travels five days a week, she ends up spending Rs 4,000 a month on Metro. But a two-wheeler saves both money and time, and helps in negotiating the innards of Bengaluru's residential maze.

In addition, last-mile connectivity remains a major challenge. Commuters often incur extra expenses on parking, as well as on autos or bike taxis to reach their final destination, significantly increasing the overall travel costs. As a result, many find using their own two-wheelers a more economical and convenient option.

The lack of a well-integrated public transport system is another key factor. In areas such as the Outer Ring Road, long-pending demands for Metro connectivity are yet to be fulfilled, forcing office-goers to rely heavily on private modes of transport for their daily commute.

No relief for govt as HC stands firm on SSLC evaluation rules

Times News Network

It refuses to review order directing SSLC exam valuation as per existing rules, maintaining that no error was apparent

Bengaluru: In a big setback for state govt, Karnataka high court Tuesday declined to review its April 15 order wherein a direction was issued for conducting the valuation of the recently conducted SSLC exams as per the existing rules, i.e., the revised circular dated Oct 28, 2025.

Justice ES Indiresh, who heard the arguments of advocate general Shashikiran Shetty and the petitioner-students' counsel, noted that there is no error apparent in the order passed by him on April 15 and hence, the court is not inclined to review it.

Justice Indiresh noted the notification pertaining to draft rules, ie, Karnataka Secondary Examination Board First (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2026, published to amend the Karnataka Secondary Examination Board First Regulations, was issued on April 10, well after the completion of SSLC exams on April 2, and at the time of disposal of the writ petition filed by the students, practically, there was no rule promulgated by the competent authority in force. The judge however, curtailed some portion of paragraph 8 of the April 15 order wherein court had held that "any subsequent modification is contrary to Article 14 of the Constitution of India".

As the advocate general submitted that the said portion would affect state govt's right, the judge agreed and added it is always open for the govt to modify the rules in accordance with the law. During the hearing, the AG submitted that the petitioners had relied on a newspaper article quoting the minister for primary and secondary education — a statement that was already the subject of a PIL petition in which the HC imposed a cost of Rs 1 lakh on the petitioners.

He further claimed the grading system was contemplated as a large number of students, mostly from rural areas, were found failing in said subject. At this juncture, Justice Indiresh wanted to know whether the govt wanted to bring about this change so that all the students could pass.

The judge further pointed out that a section of students do have Kannada as their third language and if the marks system is replaced by a grading system, those students may not study the subject seriously. "If you ask those students to list the Jnanpith awardees of Kannada, they may include Pampa and Ranna (10th century poets) in the said list," the judge added.

On their part, counsel for the petitioners submitted that doing away with the marks system would hamper the chances of students who want to secure more marks in third language and thereby get higher ranks in the SSLC exam.

On April 15, the HC had directed authorities to evaluate the recently conducted exam in accordance with the rules in force on the date the notification for the 2025-26 academic year was issued.

One donation after another: City rallies behind amputee student

Times News Network

TIMES IMPACT

YOU READ IT FIRST IN TOI

CMO, MLA team up to aid amput

Girl's Father Offered To Sell Kidney To Foot Medical Bill After A Tr

HER GRIT CATCHES ATTENTION

BEYOND POLITICS

April 21, 2026

Bengaluru: A resident of Girinagar was getting ready to donate Rs 25,000 to a religious centre (mutt) to commemorate his grandfather's death anniversary. However, when he read a **Times of India** report titled 'Beyond Politics: CMO, MLA team up to aid amputee student' on Tuesday's edition, he decided to donate the same amount to the family of Kusumanjali, an amputee from Chinnanaganahalli near KGF in Kolar district, who is undergoing medical treatment in Bengaluru.

TOI reported how the class 10 student had to undergo an amputation after she was hit by a tractor last year. Her medical expenses then, along with the ongoing treatment for her bone infection, drained the family of its financial resources. On Monday, Rajajinagar MLA (BJP) S Suresh Kumar and the chief minister's office came together to help the family with the medical bills.

"Every year, I donate money in my grandfather's name to a mutt. Today, when I read about Kusumanjali and her family, I felt this was a much better cause to donate to. I collected the family's details and sent them Rs 25,000. We should encourage such students, as it is the collective failure of society that has left her in this state. I also spread the word in our group called 'Spandana', which has 120 members. Each of us donates Rs 1,000 every month to help poor families in need. Many of them also donated money to the family, and we will collectively donate around Rs 50,000 for the girl's medical treatment by Wednesday," the donor said.

Good Samaritans across Bengaluru donated Rs 65,000 to Kusumanjali's family by Tuesday evening — a significant amount for her father, who is financially exhausted. "At a time when we were staring at a crisis, we are grateful for the help coming our way. I will not spend this money on anything other than her treatment and will save any excess for her education," her dad Shankar said.

Lauding the spirit of Bengaluru, Suresh Kumar said he was positively overwhelmed by the response of the people. "Many told me that they are helping the family financially, and we are expecting at least Rs 1 lakh more to reach the family by tomorrow," he said.

Meanwhile, Kusumanjali will be shifted from the private hospital where she is currently admitted to the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, a govt facility, where her treatment will continue free of cost.

Miscreants in car steal three cows at night

Times News Network

Bengaluru: In a brazen late-night heist, car-borne miscreants allegedly made off with three cows from Vaddarapalya in Electronics City recently.

The animals, tied in the parking areas of two farmers' homes, were quietly whisked away under the cover of darkness. Two cows were stolen from one house, while a third was taken from a nearby residence.

According to a complaint filed by Agastin, a resident of RR Layout in Vaddarapalya, the incident occurred between 10pm on April 14 and 4.30am on April 15. Agastin, a small-scale milk vendor, had tied his two cows in the parking area of his house. When he woke up at 4.30am to milk them, he found both missing. Alarmed, he began searching the neighbourhood and contacted acquaintances. During the search, he met Prasad Yadav near MMB Banquet Hall at Jelly Machine Gate, who informed him that his cow had also gone missing during the same time frame. The two men jointly searched the area but failed to trace the cows.

Despite massive repair drive, over 1.2k potholes to be filled

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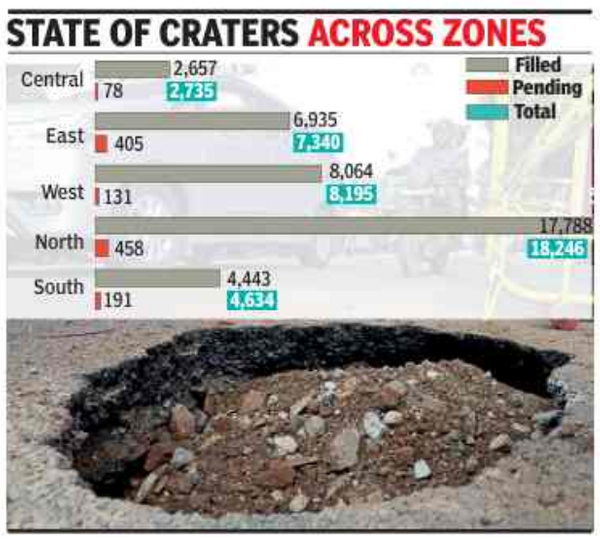

Bengaluru: Even as the state govt claims to have filled the majority of potholes across the city, more than 1,200 craters continue to persist, highlighting gaps in execution, inter-agency coordination, and long-term road maintenance.

According to official data, out of 41,150 potholes identified across Bengaluru till March 2026, nearly 39,887 have been repaired, leaving 1,263 still unattended. While the authorities describe this as "substantial progress," civic experts and residents argue the real number could be significantly higher because of recurring road damage and ongoing utility works.

Data shows uneven progress across the five city corporations under Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). Bengaluru North accounts for the highest number of potholes, followed by West and East zones. While most zones have achieved over 90% closure rates, hundreds of potholes remain scattered across arterial and internal roads.

GBA officials admit that freshly laid roads are often damaged again owing to trenching by agencies such as BWSSB, Bescom, and gas pipeline operators, leading to a cyclical repair problem.

Govt has spent around Rs 33.9 crore across the five corporations for pothole repairs. A senior GBA official said, "Pothole filling is not a one-time activity. With multiple agencies digging roads and monsoon pressures, we are dealing with a continuous cycle of damage and repair. The focus now is shifting to preventive maintenance and stricter restoration norms."

Amid criticism, GBA chief commissioner Maheshwar Rao has directed all five city corporations to procure dedicated pothole-filling machines to ensure faster and standardised repairs across Bengaluru. "Each corporation must be equipped to respond immediately. Roads dug up must be restored without delay, and costs will be recovered from defaulting agencies," Rao said during a recent review meeting.

Cyclist vs toll staff: Video sparks debate

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A cyclist who travelled on a stretch of national highway in Bengaluru has alleged that he was asked to pay a fee of Rs 25 at a toll plaza. A video clip of his verbal altercation with toll plaza staff has gone viral. In the footage, circulating on social media, the cyclist is heard saying he has never encountered such a situation anywhere else in the country.

"I've travelled across India on my bicycle, but this is the first time I've seen anything like this," he is heard saying in the video. However, the cyclist did not disclose the exact location of the toll plaza. Several users have tagged Union minister for road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari, questioning the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and calling the episode unacceptable.

The incident was later identified as having occurred at the Electronics City toll plaza. An official from Bangalore Elevated Tollway Ltd, which operates the elevated corridor, clarified that the cyclist had accessed the Silk Board-Electronics City elevated corridor of Hosur Road on April 18, in violation of restrictions that prohibit non-motorised vehicles from using the high-speed stretch. The official denied the allegation that the cyclist was charged a toll fee. "Bicycles are prohibited on the elevated corridor because of safety concerns. Warning signboards are installed at entry points," said the official.

As per the official, when the cyclist reached the toll plaza, staff cautioned him for breaching the rules. "No toll was collected from him," the official said.

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Pics: Chethan Shivakumar

MAKING CHANGES: During a discussion at Vidyashilp University Tuesday, experts said phone addiction is about loss of control and compulsion, urging gradual digital detox over abstinence

Bengaluru: What does it really mean to be "addicted" to your phone? At an interactive session hosted at Vidyashilp University as part of **The Times of India**'s Let's D-Stress initiative Tuesday, experts unpacked the idea, moving beyond screen-time numbers to focus on control, compulsion, and behaviour.

Students interacting with RJ Shaayan admitted to spending several hours a day on their phones, with some reporting usage of over 10 hours. However, experts cautioned against viewing addiction purely through the lens of time. "There is no magic number that says that at this point it is safe and beyond that it becomes harmful or addictive," said Ashwini Tadpatrikar, assistant professor at Vidyashilp University and former clinical psychologist at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans).

"The indicators that can tell you that you are using your phone excessively are when you begin to lose control over your use, feel a compulsive need to keep checking your phone all the time, and start facing consequences. For example, you may be working on an assignment but get distracted and switch to something else. Time passes, you postpone the task to the next day, and that next day never comes until the last minute," she added.

Dr Jayant Mahadevan, assistant professor of psychiatry at centre for addiction medicine, Nimhans, pointed to the role of platform design. "It is a characteristic of most social media apps. A variable schedule of reinforcement, where you do not know when you are going to get a reward, makes it more reinforcing and leads to the release of dopamine, which keeps you coming back repeatedly," he said.

Instead of complete abstinence, experts recommended gradual regulation. "I think the only answer is digital detox and intermittent digital fasting, but not cutting down on it completely, because that does not work. Instead, you need to gradually reduce usage and use regulatory mechanisms associated with technology. At the same time, you need to build other non-digital activities," Ashwini said.

"Self-control can be built in two ways, internally by creating motivation and setting times where you do not use technology, and externally by making access more difficult, such as disengaging features like infinite scroll or simply keeping your phone away to limit overuse," added Dr Mahadevan.

> It was terrific to host this conversation on a subject of paramount importance, not only for the educational experiences of students, but also for the growing number of Indians spending frightening amounts of time on tech gadgets. I hope **TOI** will initiate more such conversations across the country, helping foster critical awareness and encouraging a sane relationship with a technology
>
> **Prof Chandan Gowda** | DEAN, SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES, VIDYASHILP UNIVERSITY

> In the age we live in today, it is essential to develop healthy habits around technology use. This is particularly important for young people, especially students, as well as teachers, to build awareness around the nuances of technology, including what is safe and what is not. In that context, I believe we need many more such programmes
>
> **Dr Jayant Mahadevan** | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY, CENTRE FOR ADDICTION MEDICINE, NIMHANS

LET'S D-STRESS
THE TIMES OF INDIA
CHANGE Begins Here
Scan the QR to take a scientific psychological assessment of your digital habits.

> Having worked in this area for a long time, I've seen that students are among the most affected — their productivity, overall lifestyle, and day-to-day functioning all take a hit, and often by the time the impact is visible, it is already too late. That is why such events need to be held more frequently and at an early stage, so awareness can be built before harm sets in
>
> **Ashwini Tadpatrikar** | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT VIDYASHILP UNIVERSITY AND FORMER CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST AT NIMHANS

Drunk staffer drives SUV, injures man

Bengaluru: A 22-year-old man working at a four-wheeler showroom in Mahadevapura was recently booked for driving an electric sports utility vehicle in an inebriated condition, damaging four four-wheelers and injuring a pedestrian.

Abhilash works at the Mahindra showroom in Garudacharpalya. The incident took place on the evening of April 12, and Abhilash was hospitalised after angry passersby beat him up after the accident. After getting discharged, Abhilash was summoned by traffic police and booked for driving under the influence of alcohol. Probe revealed that he assisted customers dropping into the showroom for test drives. "On that day, Abhilash was angry he was not given the electric SUV, since he had consumed alcohol. When the showroom was closed and the staff were getting ready to leave, he took the keys and drove an electric SUV. However, he lost control of the vehicle," an officer said. TNN

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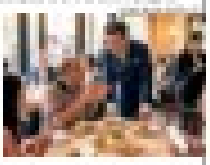
POV

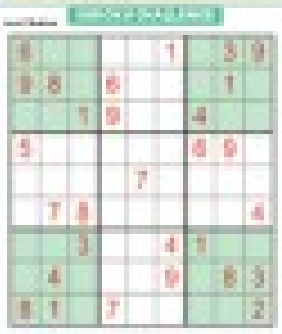


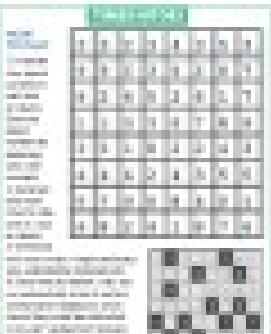
WHAT'S #TRENDING AND WHY

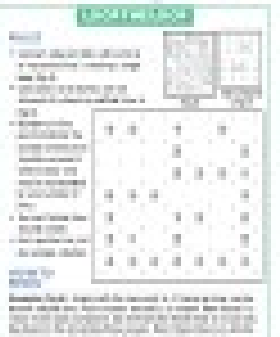
Never been more proud of my wife, says Ryan Reynolds on Blake Lively-Justin Baldoni court case

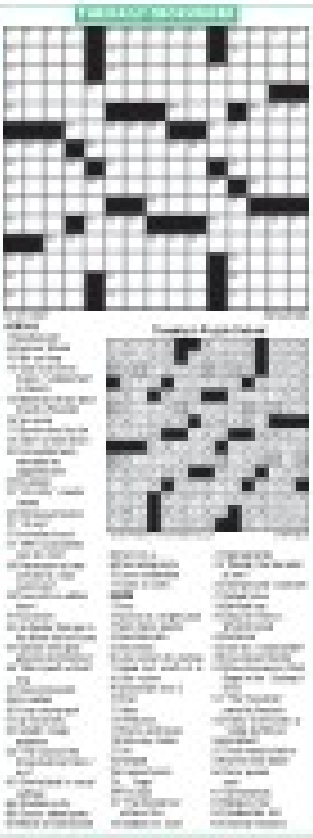
King Charles III remembers 'Darling Mama' on late Queen's 100th birthday

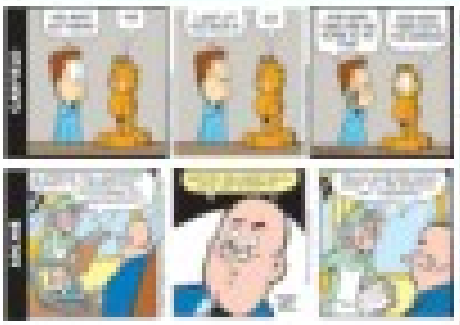
Wednesday season 2 is filming in Paris

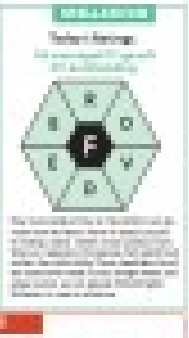


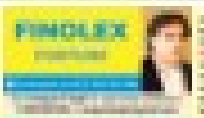


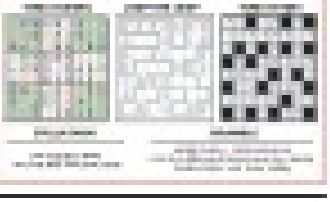












Water worry: Tanker demand rises 20-25%

BWSSB Earns ₹1.2 Crore In Two Months

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File photo

ON A MISSION: BWSSB says over 220 tankers have been deployed already and the filling infrastructure has been expanded with more than 90 filling stations

Data from BWSSB shows that in just the last two months (till April 8), the board generated almost Rs 1.2 crore in revenue through tanker supply. In the first three months of 2026 alone, 15,731 tanker orders were fulfilled, yielding Rs 1.7 crore — significantly higher than the 11,681 orders and Rs 1.2 crore recorded during Oct-Dec 2025

Bengaluru: Grappling with a sharp escalation in water scarcity across several neighbourhoods as borewells run dry, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has witnessed a steep rise in demand for its 'Sanchari Cauvery' tanker service.

The initiative, originally launched to curb the influence of private tanker operators, is now emerging as a critical lifeline for thousands of households. BWSSB officials said tanker demand has risen by 20-25% in recent weeks, reflecting the rapid depletion of groundwater reserves.

Data from BWSSB shows that in just the last two months (till April 8), the board generated almost Rs 1.2 crore in revenue through tanker supply. In the first three months of 2026 alone, 15,731 tanker orders were fulfilled, yielding Rs 1.7 crore — significantly higher than the 11,681 orders and Rs 1.2 crore recorded during Oct-Dec 2025.

"According to the 2025 groundwater assessment, Bengaluru extracts nearly 308.4 million cubic metres (MCM) of groundwater annually and is now categorised among the cities facing excessive groundwater exploitation," said an official. "A study by the Indian Institute of Science has also flagged declining groundwater levels in at least 65 wards."

Apartments and industries are among the worst affected. Of the total orders fulfilled this year, 5,819 were bulk requests from these sectors, contributing Rs 70.9 lakh in revenue — highlighting the extent to which even commercial establishments are struggling to access water.

"The number of users registering for BWSSB's tanker service has risen sharply. Since its launch in May 2025, 14,419 customers have signed up, with 3,810 registrations recorded between Jan and early April this year alone — more than double the registrations seen in the previous quarter," said the official.

BWSSB chairman Ram Prasath Manohar acknowledged the growing pressure on the city's water infrastructure but said the board is scaling up efforts to ensure reliable supply. "Demand for tanker water has increased significantly because of the rapid depletion of groundwater in several parts of Bengaluru. We have already deployed over 220 tankers and expanded our filling infrastructure with more than 90 filling stations. Our focus is on ensuring equitable and reliable water supply across the city, even during peak summer," he said.

He added BWSSB is also strengthening its operational capacity by augmenting recharge measures and improving distribution efficiency to reduce dependence on tanker supply over the long term.

Since the inception of the Sanchari Cauvery initiative, BWSSB has fulfilled 45,448 orders and generated Rs 4.7 crore in revenue — Rs 2.5 crore from online bookings and Rs 2.2 crore from bulk orders.

4-hr drama: Pocso accused climbs 9-storey building, seeks 'justice'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: High drama unfolded in Devanahalli Tuesday when a man climbed a nine-storey apartment building and threatened to end his life, demanding that the deputy commissioner be brought to the spot.

The man, Anand, is accused in two Pocso cases and of waylaying and attempting to assault the Chikkaballapur DC.

He scaled the private apartment near the Devanahalli bypass around 3pm, shouting that he wanted justice and refusing to come down unless the DC arrived.

CCTV screengrab

TENSE MOMENTS: Anand scaled a private apartment near Devanahalli bypass at 3pm

Police and fire and emergency services rushed to the scene and began negotiations, but Anand remained adamant.

Sources said he had earlier spent four years in jail in connection with a Pocso case, though the exact trigger for his protest remains unclear.

Descends after 4 hours of negotiations

In an emotional appeal, his mother reached the spot and urged him to climb down, but he initially refused. Throughout the standoff, Anand claimed his mobile phone had been compromised and reiterated his demand for justice.

After nearly four hours of tense negotiations, he was finally persuaded to descend safely around 7pm. Devanahalli police have registered a case and launched an investigation.

Baited by 'last-day offer', company director loses ₹74K

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 56-year-old company director eyeing to encash "bank reward points" — a not-too-uncommon offer in bank messages — clicked on the wrong web link and made a token payment only to lose nearly Rs 74,000 last week.

Cyberfrauds are inventing newer methods to bait victims. This time, it was a message claiming it was the "last day to redeem" benefits.

Around 6pm on April 15, Naveen (name changed), from Banashankari I Stage and director of a private electrical company, received a call and a message from an unlisted number. The message included a suspicious link (APK file), prompting the user to select a gift and pay a nominal service fee of Rs 34. Believing it to be genuine, the complainant proceeded with the transaction using his credit card. Within minutes, shock set in as an alert revealed Rs 73,889 had been debited from the same credit card without authorisation. Realising the fraud, the victim contacted the bank, only to learn the credit account was compromised and subsequently frozen.

Without losing time, the complainant dialled the national cybercrime helpline 1930 and registered a complaint. The authorities have urged the public to stay cautious of unsolicited calls, messages and links, especially those claiming to be from banks or financial institutions.

Bannerghatta rd work only restoration: Civic chief

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Amid viral posts claiming that Bannerghatta Road is being asphalted, the Bengaluru South City Corporation has clarified that the ongoing work is limited to restoration and not full-scale relaying.

The clarification comes as commuters have been raising concerns over the poor condition of the stretch, which deteriorated following multiple civic and utility works, including those by BWSSB and ongoing metro construction.

Ramesh KN, commissioner, said only a 1.5-km stretch near the IIMB area is currently being taken up for restoration. "We are not asphalting the entire stretch; this is only restoration of a portion that was cut for BWSSB works. Full asphalting is a separate, large-scale process for which tenders will be floated. We are also in the process of arranging funds to take it up and make it a proper, high-quality road," he said.

The stretch has been under strain due to continuous digging for underground utilities and the construction of the Pink Line, leading to uneven surfaces, potholes and traffic bottlenecks.

While the ongoing restoration is expected to provide temporary relief, officials indicated that a comprehensive asphalting plan will take more time, as it involves coordination between multiple agencies and budget allocations. For now, commuters along Bannerghatta Road may have to wait longer for a smoother, fully relaid stretch even as piecemeal restoration continues.

What causes most number of natural disaster deaths in K'taka? Lightning

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@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Amid intensifying pre-monsoon activity across Karnataka, lightning is emerging as the state's deadliest natural hazard, claiming more lives than many other disasters combined and raising fresh concerns as the peak lightning season sets in this May. Govt data shows that despite early warning systems and awareness measures, lightning has consistently accounted for a disproportionately high share of deaths — ranging from 38% to 56% — caused by natural calamities in the state.

According to the Annual Lightning Report 2023-24 released by India Meteorological Department (IMD) and Climate Resilient Observing Systems Promotion Council in Dec 2025, Karnataka ranked ninth among states with high lightning mortality, topping the southern states.

Even though cloud-to-ground (CG) lightning incidents declined by 21% between 2022-23 and 2023-24, CG lightning continued to be the biggest killer in the state. As per an analysis of lightning incidents from 2020 to 2023 by Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), Kalaburagi, Dakshina Kannada, and Belagavi recorded the highest number of lightning events. However, the decade-long casualties data from 2011 to 2023 placed Belagavi at the top with 86 deaths, followed by Kalaburagi (80) and Vijayapura (79). Several districts in Kalyana Karnataka and parts of Malnad have reported rising lightning deaths, with May accounting for the highest number of casualties.

A senior KSNDMC official said while fatalities have fluctuated, the threat remains persistent. "Even though the number of fatalities dropped sharply from 100 in 2022-23 to 61 in 2023-24, marking a significant decline of 39%, this gain was short-lived. Deaths shot up again to 83 in 2024-25, before dipping marginally to 77 in 2025-26, accounting for 56% of deaths due to natural calamity — the highest percentage over the past four years," the official said.

Climate variability

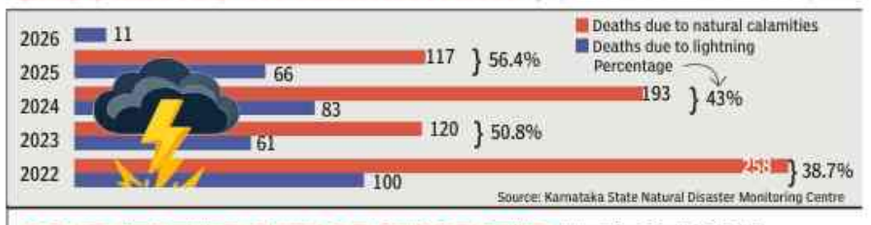
Experts have increasingly linked the risk to climate variability. "Rising mercury levels, erratic pre-monsoon activity, and localised severe thunderstorms are contributing to unpredictable lightning patterns. A few studies have even revealed that a mere one-degree rise in temperature could significantly increase lightning density. Awareness and effective early warning protocol are the keys to achieving reduced fatalities," said GS Srinivasa Reddy, former director of KSNDMC.

"Despite fewer lightning strikes, Karnataka has recorded increased fatalities, suggesting exposure, behaviour, and preparedness often matter as much as meteorological intensity."

The analysis found that rural and forested areas remain most vulnerable due to tall trees, waterbodies, and high outdoor exposure, with most victims being people working in the fields. The IMD report noted that 98% of lightning incidents occurred in the second half of the day, and most victims were men exposed in open areas or walking unprotected in the rain.

A senior revenue department (disaster control) official said the Lightning Monitoring and Early Warning System has strengthened preparedness. "Besides, the SIDILU app also provides location-specific lightning strike alert 30 to 45 minutes before the lightning strike."

CASUALTIES IN KARNATAKA OVER THE YEARS



GOVT STAFFER DIES OF SUSPECTED HEATSTROKE

Bengaluru/Belagavi: Karnataka Tuesday reported its second suspected heatstroke death in two days, even as the govt placed all district and taluk hospitals on high alert and ramped up emergency preparedness amid an intensifying heatwave sweeping large parts of the state.

A day after a 20-year-old youth in Bidar was reported as Karnataka's first suspected heatstroke fatality, 35-year-old Venkatesh Ballari, chief officer of Chinchali town panchayat in Raiabag taluk in Belagavi district is suspected to have succumbed to similar conditions. He reportedly collapsed at a Basaveshwar Jayanti programme Monday. He was rushed to nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Official confirmation on the cause of death is awaited.

The back-to-back suspected fatalities come as temperatures inch towards 45 degrees Celsius in parts of Kalyana Karnataka, with several northern districts reeling under prolonged heat stress. In response, the health and family welfare department has constituted dedicated heatstroke wards in every district hospital.

Hospitals set up special wards

Health and family welfare minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said, "The entire state is gripped by an intense heat condition with abnormal temperatures. In view of this, a dedicated heatstroke ward has been set up in every hospital with adequate bed facilities. Doctors and other support staff have also been deputed."

Sources said the special wards will have 5 to 10 beds designed on the lines of ICUs, staffed round the clock by doctors and paramedical teams. The minister urged to avoid going outdoors from 11am to 4pm, stay hydrated and take precautions.

State govt to challenge HC order on bike taxis in SC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The state govt, which has opposed bike-taxi operations, is set to file an appeal in the Supreme Court challenging the Karnataka High Court's Jan order, transport minister Ramalinga Reddy confirmed to **TOI**.

The high court had ruled that a blanket ban on bike taxis was not legally valid and directed the transport department to permit such services by classifying two-wheelers as transport vehicles and issuing contract carriage permits. The move is expected to intensify the legal dispute between the govt and bike-taxi operators.

A department source said the govt has authorised an appeal, arguing that two-wheelers cannot be treated as transport vehicles under the Motor Vehicles Act. It also cited concerns over safety risks for women, children, and pillion riders, which it plans to present before the Supreme Court. Following the HC order, autorickshaw unions have also urged the govt to challenge the ruling and ban bike-taxi services.

Student accuses college chairman of sexual abuse

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The nursing student alleged that the chairman warned her that failure to comply with his expectations would result in her failing examinations and being denied essential academic certificates

Bengaluru: A 21-year-old student of a private nursing college has accused the college chairman of sexual harassment. She alleged that the chairman made derogatory personal remarks by comparing her to his former girlfriend and threatened to fail her if she did not comply with his demands.

The student, who filed a complaint with Bagalagunte police on April 19, also claimed that the college principal supported these threats.

However, during investigation, police found that the college chairman had already filed a complaint on April 13 against the same student and her boyfriend for allegedly sharing defamatory content about him and the college on social media.

The student, a resident of Thammenahalli living in the institution's hostel, stated in her complaint that the alleged harassment began on Aug 9, 2025. She claimed that the chairman had repeatedly made derogatory and deeply personal remarks. Describing his behaviour as "perverse," she said it created a hostile and distressing environment that affected her mental wellbeing and academic focus.

She alleged that the situation escalated when the chairman began issuing threats tied to her academic future. He allegedly warned her that failure to comply with his expectations would result in her failing examinations and being denied essential academic certificates. According to the student, the college principal not only failed to intervene but also reinforced the pressure, allegedly telling her to obey the chairman's instructions or risk severe consequences.

A case was registered at Bagalagunte police station.

The college chairman defended himself, saying he was open to police investigation. "The student was behaving abnormally and I'm shocked by the complaint filed by her. She has made false allegations. We did not terminate her. We permitted her to appear for the exam, but she did not appear for it. We have even issued internal marks. We are ready to face the probe by police," he told **TOI**.

10K marathon races past ₹5cr, boosts support for 100 NGOs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: From raising funds to support the likes of Bangalore Kidney Foundation (BKF), Neonates Foundation of India (NFI) and Charlie Animal Rescue Centre (CARE), this year's TCS World 10K has already raised over Rs 5 crore that will support close to 100 NGOs. The marathon will be held on April 26 this year.

GoSports Foundation (Sports) is on top of the leaderboard this year with Rs 81.9 lakh, followed by Right To Live (Education) and United Way Bengaluru (Poverty & Nutrition), both raising over Rs 38 lakh each. In the healthcare space, NFI (Rs 33.6 lakh) and BKF (Rs 29.5 lakh) lead the chart. In the education category, Child Rights and You (CRY) lead with Rs 23.1 lakh.

Among the corporates, ASM Technologies has raised Rs 74.1 lakh in support of GoSports. Among run clubs, JJ Runners raised Rs 6.5 lakh in support of multiple causes.

Among individual fundraisers, Usha Baliga emerged as the top athlete running for a cause, raising Rs 29 lakh for BKF. "The year 2009 was my first fundraising event and I raised around Rs 50,000. Back then, there were hardly 20 individual fundraisers. And now, we have 250-plus individual fundraisers," Usha said.

Siddharth, a 11-year-old animal lover, one of the eight youngsters who raised Rs 1 lakh or above, said he pooled the funds to help animals through CARE.

Visually impaired fundraiser Idiculla Markose said he raised funds to support the elders. "Spending time with elders brings purpose to my own life, but it also reflects a growing reality: People are living longer, and families often struggle to provide care," said Markose, who helped the Samara Foundation.

— Jia Khosla

TOI

(L to R) Rajesh Krishnan, Afreen Kittur, Idiculla Markose, Siddharth, Priya Chetty Rajagopal, Sreevidya Chira and Vivek Singh at the TCS World 10K 2026 Philanthropy press meet in Bengaluru

FOR A CAUSE

The leaderboard: GoSports Foundation (₹81.9L), Right To Live and United Way Bengaluru (both ₹38L)

Healthcare: Neonates Foundation of India (₹33.6L), Bangalore Kidney Foundation (₹29.5 lakh)

Education: CRY (₹23.1L), Reaching Hand (₹22.4L), Gubbachi (₹15.8L)

Corporates: ASM Technologies (₹74.1L), OpenText (₹25.6L), AtkinsRéalis (₹25L)

Institutions: JJ Runners (₹6.5 lakh)

Individuals: Usha Baliga (₹29L), Radha & Partha (₹10.3 lakh each for We Live Foundation) and Luke Nina (₹9.9 lakh)

"Wednesday morning doesn't work for us. Let's postpone the town hall."
Kainaz Karmakar
Sukesh Nayak
Harshad Rajadhyaksha
Chief Creative Officers, Ogilvy
Brand Equity is here in an all-new avatar. With sharper takes, bolder opinions and compelling stories from the voices that matter. The kind that spark debate and earn their place in your next meeting. So, if you have something planned for Wednesday morning, we'd suggest you cancel it.
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'Hopefully, we'll get rid of fast fashion'

Our World Fashion Day, a young Fashion Week debutant, aims to spread awareness and enable action, but has had some initial hiccups, and hopes to encourage more mindful shopping in fashion

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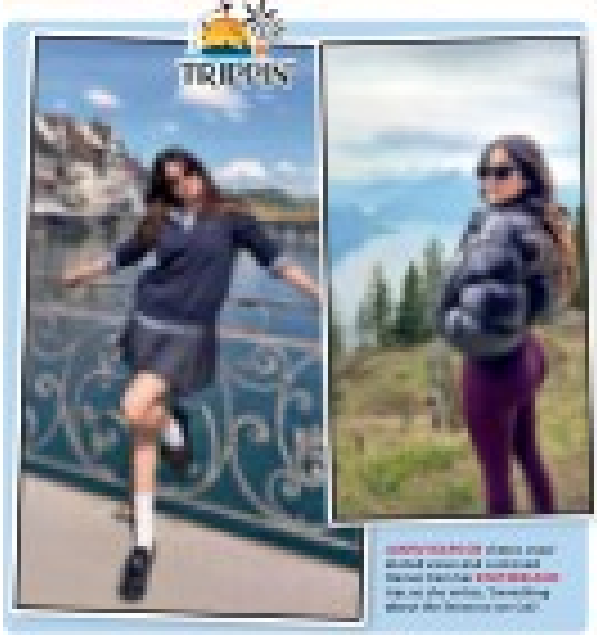

Minority rift: Cong to wait for poll result before next move

Manu Aiyappa Kanathanda & J Abbas Mulla | TNN

Bengaluru/Hubballi: Congress has deferred a decision on internal disciplinary issues until the outcome and examine the conduct of those under the lens.

Sources say party brass has opted for a calibrated approach, linking any further action to the electoral verdict. An AICC functionary said the party will internally review the outcome and examine the conduct of those under the lens.

"A victory may settle the issue, but an adverse outcome could lead to further action," the functionary said.

The standoff stems from disciplinary action for alleged anti-party activity against two MLCs — K Abdul Jabbar, who was suspended from primary membership of the party, and Naseer Ahmed, who was removed as political secretary to the chief minister. It triggered dissent within a section of Muslim functionaries, while another faction backed the move, citing organisational discipline.

Housing minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan is also under scrutiny for allegedly supporting rival candidates to defeat Congress nominee Samarth Shamanur. Zameer has denied the allegations and is learnt to have conveyed his position to Randeep Singh Surjewala, AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka. He reportedly cited prior commitments to campaign in Kerala and internal coordination issues in Davanagere South as reasons for his limited involvement.

Senior functionaries close to chief minister Siddaramaiah have also raised concerns with central brass, cautioning against precipitate action. In a communication to Rahul Gandhi, they highlighted the sensitivity of any move against Zameer, pointing to the role of minority and Dalit support in the party's 2023 assembly victory.

Within the state unit, senior functionaries have warned that premature disciplinary measures could deepen factional divides. The issue has exposed fault lines within Muslim functionaries, with one camp backing Zameer and another aligned with leaders such as Saleem Ahmed and Rizwan Arshad.

The discontent has spilled beyond the party. A section of Karnataka State Muslim Organisations' Federation criticised the disciplinary action, alleging that the party was overlooking the community despite its electoral backing. In a memorandum to the high command, they flagged possible political repercussions. However, another group of Muslim members and KPCC office-bearers supported the disciplinary measures, attributing confusion among voters in Davanagere South to internal dissent.

Senior ministers have also intervened. Public works minister Satish Jarkiholi met state Congress chief DK Shivakumar and flagged concerns over the handling of the issue. Shivakumar is learnt to have acknowledged lapses and assured corrective steps.

Across the state, several Muslim voices have accused Congress brass of targeting prominent Muslim figures instead of resolving internal differences through dialogue. They said the action has sent a negative signal to Muslim voters across Karnataka and could have implications in the 2028 assembly elections.

Gurunath Ullikashi, leader of Ahinda Samata Sena, said the confusion needs to be addressed, adding that Ahinda would be incomplete without Muslims. Ashraf Ali Bashirahemad, convener of Muslim Voice of Karnataka (MVOK), said the party was gradually losing the community's trust, and recent action had created a perception that Muslim members were being singled out.

TOI

TAKING IT SLOW: Satish Jarkiholi called on DK Shivakumar last week and discussed action against Muslim functionaries

> Abdul Jabbar's suspension may be reconsidered after results of the Davanagere South byelection are announced. There are instances where suspended members were reinstated. No action has been taken against others. We are not sure whether any anti-party activity took place. We will discuss this issue once results are declared
> **Satish Jarkiholi** | MINISTER

Plan to turn HAL airport into mega aviation hub

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Bengaluru: The state govt is preparing a 10-year blueprint to turn HAL airport campus in Bengaluru into an integrated defence-civil-space aviation district, positioning the city among the world's leading aerospace hubs.

HAL Aerospace Renaissance Masterplan (2026–2036), prepared by Karnataka State Policy and Planning Commission (KSPPC) and submitted to chief secretary Shalini Rajneesh for central clearance, proposes redeveloping nearly 700 acres into a unified ecosystem combining military aviation, commercial operations, space mobility and emerging technologies. If cleared, the project aims to place Bengaluru alongside global centres such as Toulouse, Hamburg and Seattle by 2036.

The plan proposes a joint state-centre implementation authority to fast-track approvals, manage land use and coordinate across ministries. A digital control tower is also envisaged to track maintenance, repair and overhaul output, R&D activity, and clean energy adoption.

But the proposal hinges on central approval since the airport is administered by the ministry of defence. In a communication to the infrastructure development department, officials said, "any decisions regarding its redevelopment, land-use optimization, and integration with broader aerospace innovation activities must be taken at the level of the defence ministry."

Officials also suggested aligning the project with the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor and the Bengaluru-Mumbai Economic Corridor to strengthen trade and logistics networks.

Mohandas Hegde, KSPPC member, said that if executed through a PPP or joint venture with global aerospace majors and national institutions, the project could generate over $20 billion in economic output and create more than two lakh high-skilled jobs.

The blueprint suggests a key pillar is a Safran-led maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) ecosystem and an India-based M88 engine facility for Rafale jets. It also proposes co-manufacturing air-to-surface weapons with Bharat Electronics Ltd.

The district will integrate civil aviation, defence and space-linked systems, while introducing urban air mobility such as electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) air taxis and autonomous platforms with dedicated testing corridors. The plan includes a HAL Global Training and Skilling Academy to train 20,000 technicians annually.

TOI

SET TO SPREAD WINGS? The state govt admits the proposal hinges on clearance from the Centre

₹501cr boost for rural education

Rural development and panchayat raj (RDPR) department has released Rs 501 crore as the first instalment to zilla (ZPs) and taluk panchayats (TPs) to support development initiatives, especially in the education sector. RDPR minister Priyank Kharge said the funds were to be used between April and June. He said among major allocations, Bengaluru Urban received Rs 23 crore, while Tumakuru received Rs 19.7 crore and Bengaluru Rural was allotted Rs 6.8 crore. He said the funds can be used for school education programmes, infrastructure development, student welfare schemes, and procurement of educational materials.

Graft in KK board: Kheny

Former Bidar South MLA Ashok Kheny has demanded a probe into alleged misappropriation of Kalyana Karnataka Development Board (KKRDB) funds. In a letter to governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot, he alleged misappropriation of allocated funds of Rs 26,878 crore since 2013. He said the board is influenced by "certain powerful politicians" and quoted examples of his former constituency and taluk being denied funds due to arbitrary reasons. He sought an investigation by CBI or CVC.

C'nagar Covid deaths: CM signals action

Times News Network

Mysuru/Chamarajanagar: Chief minister Siddaramaiah Tuesday indicated action may be initiated against officials responsible for the deaths of multiple patients at Chamarajanagar District Hospital due to lack of oxygen during the second Covid-19 wave.

After distributing appointment letters to affected families, the CM said in Gundlupet: "I will discuss the issue with authorities and fix responsibility for the tragedy."

The incident remains one of Karnataka's most severe pandemic-related crises. On the night of May 2, 2021, the hospital ran out of liquid medical oxygen after the Mysuru DC allegedly refused to share oxygen with her Chamarajanagar counterpart citing lack of instruction from higher-ups. While initial figures released by the govt were lower, a subsequent inquiry commission pegged the death toll at 36.

On Tuesday, appointment orders were formally distributed to members of 25 families following sustained petitions and demonstrations by victims' kin seeking both accountability and rehabilitation. The families had also raised the issue during Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, where they were promised jobs.

Siddaramaiah said 31 families were identified for employment. "Two declined the offer, and in some cases there are technical delays," he said.

Nalapad: ED raid aimed at blocking my father's ministerial chances

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A day after Enforcement Directorate (ED) sleuths conducted search and seizure operations at the residence of MLA NA Haris, his eldest son and former Karnataka Youth Congress president Mohammad Nalapad said it was a conspiracy to derail his father's ministerial prospects.

"The raid was conducted on my brother and me. There is no connection between this and NA Haris. Just because we are his children and staying at his house, the ED came here," Nalapad said.

He said the enforcement case information report (ECIR) was registered in 2021, but searches are happening only now. "Does a criminal hold on to evidence for six years after an ECIR is filed? I am questioning the timing of this raid. It was not targeted at me or my brother but my father," he alleged.

Nalapad said officials seized only two mobile phones during the 21-hour search. He also clarified his position on alleged Bitcoin scam accused Srikrishna Ramesh, also known as Sriki. "Everyone knows that my brother and I are friends with Sriki. I have never said Sriki was unknown to me or my brother. But I don't know what he does in his house. Can his crimes be linked to us?" he asked.

Selective targeting: CM

Meanwhile, CM Siddaramaiah alleged "selective targeting" by the central govt, pointing out ED actions were focused on Congress functionaries, while BJP members did not face similar scrutiny. Home minister G Parameshwara said the SIT probe into the bitcoin case was in final stages but delayed due to technical and transnational factors.

Madhusudhan SR

OPEN & SHUT: Siddaramaiah and cabinet colleagues in Gundlupet on Tuesday

Report on squabbles

Home minister G Parameshwara has directed MA Saleem, DG&IGP, to file a report on allegations of harassment by DCRE inspector Srinivas against his superiors, as well a letter written by SP SS Kashi raising concerns against Mangaluru City police commissioner. "Action will be taken based on the report," he said.

K'taka netas power Cong, BJP push in TN polls

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Bengaluru: With less than 48 hours left for polling booths to open in Tamil Nadu, BJP and Congress have intensified their campaigns, deploying functionaries and resources to support their allies in a high-stakes contest dominated by DMK and AIADMK. Facing a limited cadre base in Tamil Nadu, both national parties have leaned heavily on their Karnataka units.

Although both parties are junior allies in Tamil Nadu, they have gone all out to sway voters in constituencies they are contesting while also strengthening their alliances on the ground.

Congress deployed some 50 functionaries, including deputy CM DK Shivakumar and several ministers, while BJP sent about 30 functionaries, including opposition leader R Ashoka. Many of them were assigned to constituencies with sizable Kannada-speaking populations such as Thalli, Hosur, Dharmapuri and Salem.

"Some members who are versatile in Hindi campaigned among smaller vote banks like Gujaratis, Rajasthanis and even Marathas in Thanjavur, who claim to be descendants of Chatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj," said a Karnataka BJP functionary.

Congress adopted a similar approach, deploying functionaries who could engage with smaller communities and coordinate rallies for national functionaries.

DK Suresh, Shivakumar's brother, has been in Tamil Nadu for the past 15 days overseeing campaign coordination with local functionaries. "While a majority have been deployed as observers, people like Suresh have been given charge of certain constituencies to ensure the victory of Congress candidates," said a functionary.

Some functionaries though described the large-scale deployment as a "customary" exercise aimed at giving Karnataka politicians exposure to work in other states.

"While all this may be true, the fact remains that both Congress and BJP members had little to do back home and so were deployed to help parties in TN. Had there been political action here, none would have gone to Tamil Nadu," said a Congress functionary.

But labour minister Santosh Lad defended the move, saying it offered "valuable" exposure. "The aim was to give us an understanding of how elections are held in that state," said Lad. "It helped us connect with our counterparts, many of whom have Karnataka and Bengaluru connections. It was a learning experience, while we too shared our ideas with our workers and functionaries in Tamil Nadu."

BJP's Chaluvadi Narayanaswamy, opposition leader in the legislative council, echoed similar views. "It is natural for functionaries from adjoining states to help each other. This is an advantage which national parties have," he said. "Also, many functionaries from Bengaluru are versatile in at least two or more languages including Tamil. For BJP, the aim was to ensure no effort is spared to ensure victory of our NDA candidates."

TTD eyes location at tri-junction of K'taka, Maha, Goa for spiritual hub

▸ Continued from page 1

Land for the temple has been donated by Belagavi Reddy Sangha, with a formal handover held at Reddy Bhavan in Sadashiv Nagar Tuesday. TTD also intends to acquire additional land nearby to develop infrastructure for pilgrims.

Naresh highlighted Belagavi's location at the tri-junction of Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa, saying it has the potential to grow into a major spiritual hub.

He added that the shrine will boost the regional pilgrimage circuit, especially for devotees visiting the Mahalaxmi temple in Kolhapur.

Revenue target of ₹9k cr

Naresh also said TTD has set a Rs 9,000 crore revenue target from paid darshan tickets to support its temples and infrastructure nationwide. It currently manages temples at six locations across India.

Killer surprise: Woman tied lover's hands & legs

▸ Continued from page 1

Police said Prema offered to give Kiran a "surprise" and "a good time".

She blindfolded Kiran and tied his hands and legs with a rope. When he questioned her, she allegedly reassured him it was "part of an act".

Minutes later, Prema allegedly poured an inflammable liquid — kerosene or petrol — on him and set him ablaze. Struggling to free himself, Kiran died on the spot.

Hearing his screams and noticing thick smoke, Prema's neighbours alerted authorities. Fire and emergency services personnel rushed to the spot. Initially, police suspected it to be a case of suicide, as claimed by Prema. Inconsistencies in her statement and later investigations contradicted her claim.

Investigators found the accused had purchased inflammable liquid in advance. She allegedly recorded Kiran's final moments on her mobile phone, which has since been seized.

During questioning, the woman claimed she was in the bathroom when she heard a loud noise. Upon sustained interrogation, Prema reportedly confessed to the crime.

"Investigation, prima facie, indicates the woman, in the guise of a romantic interlude, tied the victim and set him on fire. Further investigation is on," a senior officer said.

DCP (North-West) Nagesh DL said the investigating officers are yet to verify the woman's claims as she is changing her statement frequently.

Police are waiting for Kiran's parents to lodge a complaint. The body of the victim has been shifted to Victoria Hospital for postmortem.

The accused, Prema, blindfolded Kiran and tied his hands and legs with a rope. When he questioned her, she told him it was "part of an act". Minutes later, she is said to have poured an inflammable substance — suspected to be kerosene or petrol — on him and set him on fire. Kiran, who struggled to free himself, died on the spot

CM: Visit to 'jinxed' district strengthens me

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Amid power struggle in Karnataka, CM Siddaramaiah Tuesday turned the Chamarajanagar-jinx theory on its head, saying every visit to the border district has consolidated his position as chief minister.

It's long held — and believed — that a CM visiting Chamarajanagar district loses power.

Amid whispers of succession, power-sharing tensions and lobbying in Delhi, the CM's statement at Gundlupet helipad in Chamarajanagar district was seen as a direct message to his detractors and an assertion of authority.

The CM told reporters: "I do not believe in superstitions. I have been visiting Chamarajanagar. In fact, once I casually remarked that visiting Chamarajanagar makes the position stronger!"

Sources said Siddaramaiah, with his statement, has signalled that every challenge against him has made him stronger.

— Manav Sharma

Nepal confirms piece of stolen cultural artefact

▸ Continued from page 1

It was sent to the Archaeological Survey of India, which confirmed it as a ninth-century sculpture, consistent with early medieval Himalayan iconography and material traits.

Further verification linked the object to archival records of a stolen Padmapani stele from Nepal, also corroborated by Nepalese media reports documenting the theft.

Consignment under customs custody for further action

"Indian authorities subsequently coordinated with the Ministry of External Affairs, which engaged the Nepal govt. Nepal confirmed the piece as a stolen cultural artefact," senior air cargo officials said.

The consignment remains under Customs custody for further legal proceedings.

7 get 7-yr RI in grenade-ammunition case

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A special NIA court Tuesday sentenced seven accused, including prime accused T Nazeer, to seven years in prison in a 2023 Bengaluru grenade and ammunition recovery case. The court imposed a fine of Rs 48,000 on each of the convicted accused.

In 2023, Bengaluru City police had recovered four live grenades, a pistol and ammunition from a house in RT Nagar. Acting on intelligence, police had seized explosive materials, walkie-talkies and maps, following which National Investigation Agency (NIA) took over the probe.

According to investigators, the accused had allegedly conspired to trigger blasts at multiple locations in Bengaluru. NIA said the accused were in contact with T Nazeer, identified as the mastermind of the 2008 Bengaluru blasts, and were allegedly radicalised by him while in prison.

After their release, they are said to have plotted fresh attacks before being arrested in 2023.

Besides Nazeer, Junaid, Syed Suhail Khan, Mohammed Umar, Jahid Tabrez, Syed Mudassir Pasha, Mohammed Fazil Rabani, Anees Fathim and Salman Khan were sentenced to seven-year imprisonment. Chand Pasha and Dr Nagaraj, a physician, were handed sentence under Prevention of Corruption Act.

Special public prosecutor Prasanna Kumar appeared for NIA. The court had reserved its verdict after hearing arguments before pronouncing the sentence on Tuesday.

IS conspirator gets 6-year jail

Times News Network

An NIA court has sentenced Arafath Ali, a key conspirator linked to the Shivamogga IS terror module, to six years of rigorous imprisonment for radicalising youth, facilitating terror funding through cryptocurrency and propagating terrorist ideology.

A resident of Shivamogga, Arafath had fled the country in Jan 2020 to evade arrest. He was arrested upon arrival in New Delhi in Sept 2023. According to NIA, he was an active member of the banned Islamic State and played a role in radicalisation and recruitment for the Shivamogga module. He was involved in motivating co-accused to inscribe inflammatory graffiti in Mangaluru in support of IS and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), aimed at inciting communal disharmony and spreading unrest.

Vaastu expert files extortion plaint

Bengaluru: A city vaastu expert was booked for allegedly sexually harassing and assaulting a woman who had approached him for professional consultation. However, the guru later filed a counter-complaint, accusing her and her two male associates of trying to blackmail him.

The cases are registered at Govindarajanagar police station in west Bengaluru. According to the woman, the vaastu guru sexually assaulted her on the evening of April 4 in a private office in Vijayanagar. The accused was identified as Shantakumar, and the woman's associates have been named as Jamal and Amrutalingam.

"Both parties know each other and were in touch before the incident," an officer said. TNN

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Pain fuels my music, real life shapes it: Aksomaniac

'OTT windows alone don't decide theatrical success'

Sunita Ahuja ends feud with Krushna-Kashmera

'Audiences find morally grey characters real'

TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

TMC MP YUSUF PATHAN'S FATHER-IN-LAW, TWO OTHERS HELD FOR ASSAULTING MUMBAI CAR DRIVER

BARAMATI BYPOLL: SUPRIYA SULE SEEKS RECORD MANDATE FOR DY CM SUNETRA PAWAR AT CLOSING RALLY

HACK OF THE DAY — **DOWNLOAD LANGUAGES BEFORE YOU LOSE SIGNAL**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Keeps translation working when mobile data is slow, expensive, or unavailable during travel and patchy-network situations

WHAT TO DO: Download the languages you need in Google Translate before the trip, not after you are already stuck offline

STEPS:

1. **Open** the Google Translate app
2. **Find** the language you expect to use
3. **Download** it to your device while on Wi-Fi
4. **Repeat** this for both source and target languages if needed
5. **Test** one offline translation before you travel

NOTE: This is one of those small setup steps that becomes incredibly valuable the moment your signal disappears

SCAN FOR MORE

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

Manipur police fire on protesters opposing CM opening BDO, 1 injured

One person suffered a bullet injury after police on Tuesday fired multiple rounds to disperse protesters opposing the inauguration of a block development office (BDO) at Wangjing by Manipur CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh, reports **Donald Sairem**.

The demonstrators were protesting the recent deaths of two children in a bomb attack in Tronglaobi. They blocked NH 102 at multiple locations and obstructed other key roads leading to the BDO, forcing the CM to take a helicopter to Phundrei and travel the remaining distance by road.

Manipur police said a large group armed with stones and catapults advanced toward the venue. "Despite repeated warnings and appeals by police personnel to disperse, the crowd continued to move aggressively... As a last resort, controlled firing was undertaken in strict adherence to established protocols," police said. One person, identified as Elangbam Nandbir Singh (40), was injured.

STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Why school stops: The answer splits cleanly by gender

Among 18-to 24-year-old married people who dropped out of school, the stated reason reveals a near-total gender divide

Women		Men
73% cite domestic duties at home	VS	89% say they had to earn for their household

These are people who attended school at some point but are not currently enrolled. Among never-married youth, the same split appears, though it's less extreme

Source: PLFS 2024

81-yr-old saves engr son from digital arrest fraud

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Pune: An 81-year-old man's timely intervention saved his 35-year-old son, a chemical engineer, from losing Rs12 lakh in digital arrest fraud on Monday, days after he participated in a police awareness session on cyberfraud at a senior citizens' club.

Cybercrooks impersonating the Mumbai police crime branch officials had called the elderly man's son on Sunday, claiming they had intercepted a parcel containing drugs and five passports booked in his name, and threatened him with arrest. When they told him to share bank details and transfer Rs12 lakh on a video call the next day, the engineer informed his father about it. The senior citizen immediately alerted the Pimpri Chinchwad cyber police.

The engineer and his wife were on the video call from 11am on Sunday to 2.30pm on Monday, trying to keep the crooks engaged, when the police personnel entered the room. Sensing trouble, the scammers disconnected the video call. "His father's timely alert saved his money," an officer from the Pimpri Chinchwad cyber police said.

Govt doesn't want to control temples at all, says Centre

'Interpretation Of Constitutional Provisions Can't Be Viewed Via Religious Lens'

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Chardham Devasthanam Board manages Kedarnath (in pic) and Badrinath shrines in Uttarakhand. In Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, too, temples are run by state govt-supervised bodies

New Delhi: At a time when thousands of temples are managed through state-supervised Devaswom Boards, Centre on Tuesday told Supreme Court that it did not favour govt control over temples and clarified that it had already placed its interpretation of constitutional provisions that enable states to manage secular activities of religious institutions.

During the faith vs fundamental rights debate before a nine-judge bench led by CJI Surya Kant, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan said SG Tushar Mehta, on behalf of the Centre, and senior advocate A M Singhvi for Travancore Devaswom Board, which manages Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple, had given a particular interpretation of Articles 25 and 26 as govt wanted to control temples.

Mehta sought the bench's permission to rebut the interpretation of his arguments by Sankaranarayanan and said, "Govt does not want to control the temples at all and what he mentioned was purely a constitutional interpretation of Article 25(1)(a), which empowers the state to manage economic, political and secular activities of any religion."

Justice Amanullah asked Mehta whether his "govt should not control the temples" argument was confined to Hindu religious institutions. The SG said when the court and counsels were engaged in interpretation of constitutional provisions, they could not "be viewed through Hindu, Muslim, Christian or any other religious lens".

Justice Bagchi said the interpretation must be from standpoint of a citizen. The SG said he had given an overview of the diversity in Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and other denominations.

In Kerala, several state govt-supervised bodies, including Travancore, Cochin, Malabar, Guruvayur and Koodalmanikyam Devaswom Boards, control around 3,000 temples. In Tamil Nadu, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department controls over 30,000 temples. In Andhra Pradesh, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Trust Board controls Tirupati Balaji temple. In Karnataka, Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department manages temples. The Chardham Devasthanam Board manages Badrinath and Kedarnath shrines in Uttarakhand.

FDA asks Maha eateries to disclose cheese substitutes by Apr 30

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Maharashtra's Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) has set April 30 as the deadline for restaurants, hotels, caterers and fast food vendors to clearly disclose on menu cards and electronic display boards if dishes are prepared using cheese analogue. Analogue cheese is a dairy substitute engineered to mimic the taste, texture, and melting properties of real cheese, often using vegetable oils.

The directive, issued by food safety commissioner Shridhar Dubey-Patil, said the enforcement would begin on May 1. Violators will face action under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and related rules and regulations.

In a press note, FDA said consumers had complained about being misled because some outlets were using cheese analogue without disclosure. It also said some products were being sold in the market under names resembling paneer or cheese, confusing buyers. The note said there are distinctions between paneer and cheese analogue under food safety regulations. Paneer, it said, is made only from milk, while dairy or cheese analogue is made using edible oils, starch, emulsifiers and other non-milk ingredients, although it may resemble paneer or cheese. FDA said analogue products are not harmful, but consumers must have information about ingredients to make informed choices. Complaints can be raised on FDA's toll-free number 1800-222-365.

FDA also issued orders on installing CCTV cameras to monitor all retail and wholesale drug shops in Mumbai suburban district. Its note said Schedule H, H1 and X drugs are available to children without a doctor's prescription. "By consuming them, these children become dependent on the drugs... It is necessary to develop a strong monitoring and reporting system."

MP clerk dies by suicide; kin allege humiliation

Amarjeet Singh & Arindam Ghosh | TNN

Bhopal/Jhansi: A 54-year-old clerk with Datia civic body in MP died by suicide after being allegedly downgraded and "made to count" garbage vans for refusing to comply with the illegal demands of some of his colleagues and seniors.

The family of deceased Dilip Singh said he found it "deeply humiliating", and lodged a complaint at a Jhansi police station on April 19 accusing the chief municipal officer (CMO) and two staffers of sustained harassment and coercion. The CMO, however, said the clerk was shunted out for neglecting his work.

A case of abetment to suicide has been registered, and police have initiated a probe.

According to the complaint, Dilip was working as an establishment clerk with the civic body. His wife Madhuri Singh alleged that two staffers pressured him to forge documents to show that a temporary employee appointed in 2011 was actually recruited in 2006, and even offered a bribe of Rs 50,000. When he refused, he was allegedly abused, threatened and repeatedly humiliated by colleagues and seniors, including the CMO.

Headmaster puts stinging nettle in trousers of 10 students, suspended

Ashis Senapati | TNN

Kendrapada: From beatings to kneel downs and standing on one leg, punishment at schools used to be varied. A headmaster of a govt school in Odisha's Jajpur district went several steps ahead by putting stinging nettle inside the trousers of 10 students. Their alleged crime — creating disturbance in class.

The incident from April 17 came to notice on Tuesday after the headmaster, Basudev Dehuri, was suspended for his act. The affected students, meanwhile, suffered from severe itching and developed rashes.

The incident triggered widespread condemnation. Parents and family members of the children staged an indefinite dharna in front of the school gate on April 18, demanding strict action against Dehuri.

AI image

NEXT-LEVEL CRUELTY

According to their complaint, students of Classes 4 and 5 at Sarubila Upper Primary School were causing a ruckus, following which the headmaster plucked stinging nettle from bushes near the school premises and used it to punish them. The headmaster was also accused of abusing and assaulting some of those students.

While Dehuri admitted to his guilt and submitted a written apology assuring that he would not repeat such an act, the education department proceeded with disciplinary action. Acting on complaints from parents, Narayan Das, block education officer, suspended Dehuri on Tuesday.

"After learning about the incident, we conducted an inquiry, talking to the students and other teachers. Based on the findings, we suspended the headmaster," Das said.

Radio for dowry: 44yrs after wife's 'suicide', HC acquits UP man

Rajesh Kumar Pandey
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Prayagraj: Allahabad high court has acquitted a man of abetment to his wife's suicide, setting aside a Ballia court's judgment that sentenced him to 5 years of imprisonment in 1982, and observing that the prosecution failed to establish the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.

The woman succumbed to burn injuries sustained at her matrimonial home. Her father accused her husband, Rameshwar Prasad Gupta, and in-laws of harassing her for dowry, specifically a radio.

The HC found merit in the defence version that the deceased may have suffered accidental burn injuries while cooking, particularly in view of medical evidence and the absence of any dying declaration. "Mere harassment is not sufficient to constitute an offence under Section 306 of IPC, unless it mentions deliberate acts of incitement or facilitation... There should be a clear connection between the accused's behaviour and the tragic outcome," Justice Sanjiv Kumar observed in his April 2 order.

The HC noted that the letter written by the deceased to her parents merely contained a request for a radio or money and did not disclose any coercion or harassment.

Actor-director Parthiban to get 'no caste no religion' cert

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Chennai: Madras HC Monday directed the issuance of a "no caste, no religion" certificate to actor and director R Parthiban after he moved the court, alleging delay by authorities in providing him the document. Allowing the plea, Justice M Dhandapaani directed the jurisdictional tahsildar to issue the certificate on or before April 29.

Parthiban told HC that he had applied for a "no caste, no religion" certificate with Sholinganallur tahsildar on March 20, but it was kept pending without any action. He submitted that he had studied up to Class XI under the old SSLC pattern and had discontinued his studies thereafter without collecting any of his certificates. "I don't have a birth certificate or school certificate, which discloses my religion and community. My parents belong to the Hindu Gavara community," the actor-director stated.

HC rejects Unnao rape survivor's plea for death to ex-MLA Sengar

New Delhi: In a relief for former BJP MLA Kuldeep Sengar, the Delhi high court has dismissed the Unnao rape survivor's plea seeking death penalty for him in her father's custodial death case, observing that she failed to show "sufficient cause" for condoning a delay of 1,945 days (five-plus years) in filing an appeal against the sentence awarded by a trial court. A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja Monday termed the "unexplained" delay as a case of "deliberate inaction and negligence". It observed that the appellant was aware of the outcome and was "actively participating" in connected proceedings. Yet, she "consciously chose not to avail the statutory remedy of appeal within the prescribed period of limitation", despite availability of legal advice from her advocate, the court said.

The survivor's father was arrested, allegedly at the behest of Kuldeep Sengar, under the Arms Act, and died in custody on April 9, 2018 owing to police brutality. On March 13, 2020, the trial court held Sengar and his brother Jaideep Sengar guilty, convicting them of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, and handed the maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment. The survivor sought enhancement of the sentence, arguing that they should be awarded the death penalty for murder.

I'm guarding nation's borders, hope nation will give me justice: Anjel Chakma's BSF father

Kalyan.Das@timesofindia.com

Dehradun: It has been almost four months since the murder of 24-year-old MBA student from Tripura Anjel Chakma in Dehradun for resisting what his family has said were "racial slurs". And the youngster's traumatised family continues to await justice as the prime accused, Yagya Awasthi, remains at large. Anjel's father, Tarun Prasad Chakma, a head constable in BSF and currently deployed at the Bangladesh border in Tripura, told **TOI** over phone on Tuesday that despite the scars and unforgettable pain, he is determined to complete his stipulated duty to protect the country.

'I was broken to the core but despite the tragedy I didn't ditch my national duty by resigning or taking VRS. I will complete my full service tenure'

"I was broken to the core but despite the tragedy I didn't ditch my national duty by resigning or taking VRS. I will complete my full service tenure. I am guarding my country's borders and I hope the country will give me justice," said Chakma, who recently got himself transferred to his home state from Manipur to take care of his family.

Chakma further said his wife and younger son, Michael, who was with Anjel at the time of the horrific incident on Dec 9, 2025, are yet to recover. "My wife keeps crying... Michael remains silent most of the time, taking the blame on himself for Anjel's death. My heart cries inside, seeing both of them in this condition," Chakma said.

Anjel and his brother Michael were allegedly attacked by the six accused, including two minors, for opposing racial slurs targeted at them in Dehradun's Selaqui area. Suffering serious injuries on his neck and lower back, Anjel was admitted to a private hospital in Dehradun, where he succumbed on Dec 26, causing widespread outrage across the country.

His uncle, Momen Chakma, who saw him grow since childhood, said they hope justice will be served and Awasthi, a native of Nepal, according to the police, is arrested soon. "Awasthi was the one who stabbed him in his back. It is disappointing and worrisome that he is still free."

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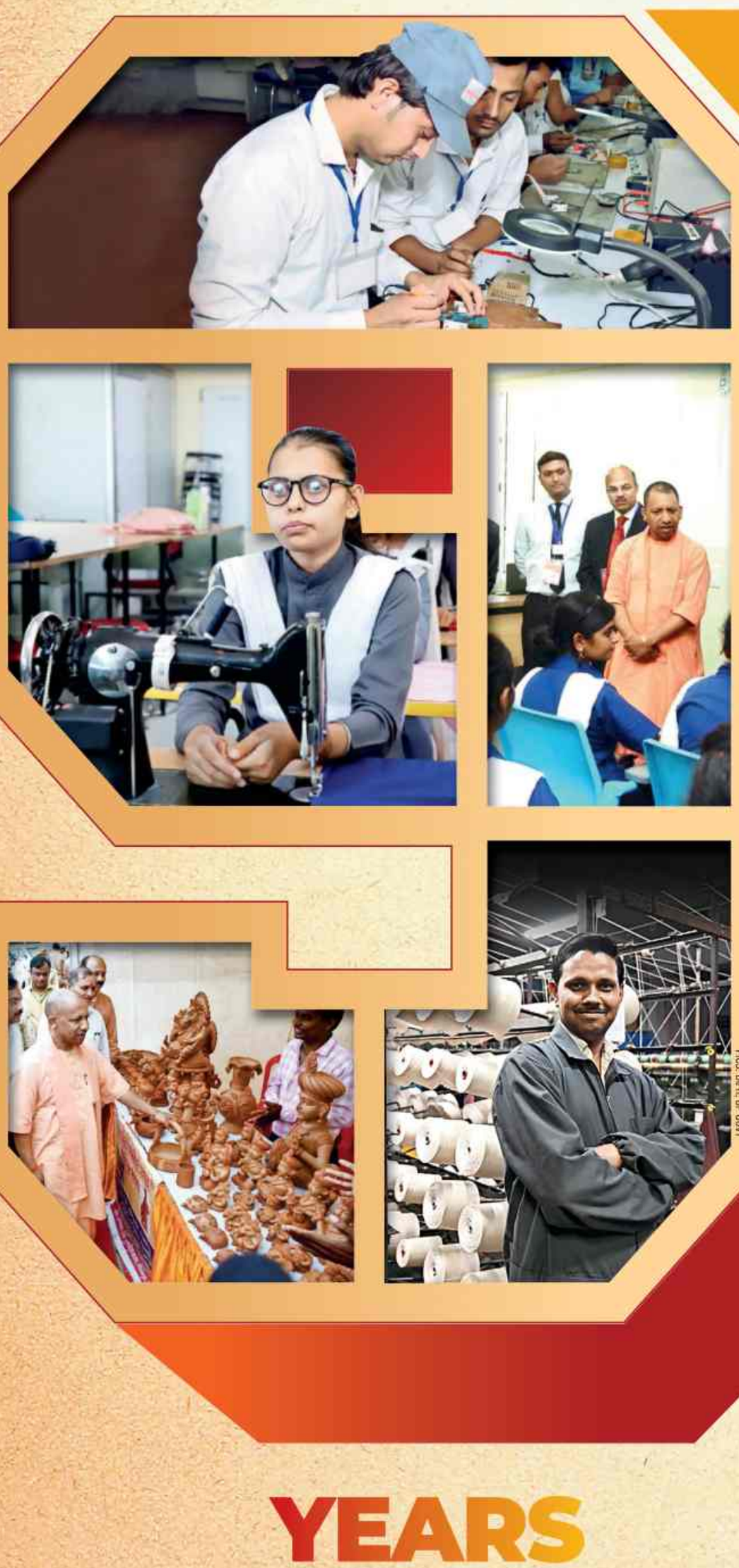

PICS: DIPR, UP GOVT

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Reply to hate speech PILs in 4 wks, Assam told

Guwahati: Gauhati HC on Tuesday directed state govt and Himanta Biswa Sarma to respond within four weeks to PILs seeking action against the CM for alleged hate speeches against minority communities in the state.

"It has been submitted on behalf of the state that the response affidavit shall be filed by the next date," the HC said and posted the case for May 28.

A bench hearing three PILs filed by Assam State Council of Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Hirendranath Gohain and 2 others, decided to club them. Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for CPM's Assam unit, said Sarma made controversial remarks even after the HC formally issued a notice to him on the issue on Feb 26. — **Mukut Das.**

Police denied permission for Rahul rally in Kol

Kolkata: Police have denied permission for Rahul Gandhi's rallies in Kolkata and Serampore, scheduled on April 23, Congress general secretary Rohan Mitra said on Tuesday.

The state Congress had planned three rallies in Kolkata and Serampore for Gandhi. For the Kolkata rallies, permission had been sought for either Ramlila Park in Entally or Park Circus ground, and Metiabruz. A separate permission was sought for holding a rally at Serampore stadium. "Police have not given us permission for a single rally while all other parties are allowed to hold rallies," Mitra said. — **Rohit Khanna.**

2 FIRs against BJP pick after TMC clash

Kolkata: Two FIRs were registered against BJP's Kolkata Port candidate, Rakesh Singh, following a skirmish with Trinamool Congress functionaries on Monday night, reports **Dwaipayan Ghosh**. A fortnight ago, Calcutta HC had released him on interim bail in the Vidyasagar statue vandalism case. The unrest began on Monday when a BJP meeting was allegedly disrupted by TMC supporters.

Curtains down on high decibel poll campaign in Tamil Nadu

Leaders Wrap Campaigns With More Promises

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

PTI

Tamil Nadu CM and DMK candidate from Kolathur constituency M K Stalin campaigns ahead of state Assembly elections on Tuesday

Chennai: Signing on the dotted line to issue coupons worth Rs 8,000 for women to buy household items and a 24/7 "war room" to address complaints of harassment against women were some of the promises made by key political players in Tamil Nadu as they wound up their high-decibel campaign on Tuesday evening for the April 23 Assembly election.

CM M K Stalin wrapped up his campaign with a mix of direct outreach in the morning, a video message, followed by a roadshow in Kolathur. "My first signature after victory will be on a file issuing Rs 8,000 worth coupons for women to buy household items," he said.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, who was on his home turf in Salem, ended his campaign with a sharp attack on DMK, urging voters to "write the conclusion of dynastic politics." He also released a video asking young voters not to waste their voters. "Dear brothers and sisters, please don't make the mistake of voting for the wrong person," EPS said, in an apparent reference to TVK president Vijay.

Hours before the deadline for the campaign neared, EPS announced fresh promises, including a 24/7 "war room" to address complaints of harassment against women.

Vijay, who held a roadshow and a meeting in Chennai, closed his campaign with a direct attack on Stalin and an indirect one on EPS. "You have stolen our symbol. You don't have any rights to criticise us," he said, alleging that AIADMK was behind the rejection of the TVK candidate's nomination in the Edappadi assembly segment.

Naam Tamilar Katchi chief Seeman, campaigning in Karaikudi, signed off with a pointed remark at Vijay, questioning the political choices of educated youth.

BJP's campaigns were muted but for a motorcycle rally in Coimbatore where former state president K Annamalai drove a bike with Coimbatore North candidate Vanathi riding pillion.

EC to release updated voters' list for Bengal today

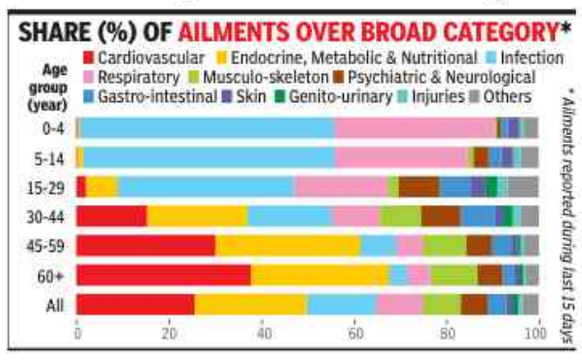
Kaushik Pradhan & Sarthak Ganguly | TNN

Kolkata: The EC will add the names approved by SIR tribunals to Bengal's electoral roll till Tuesday midnight and issue an updated list on Wednesday for the 152 assembly seats that will go to the polls in the first phase on April 23, chief electoral officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal said.

"The returning officers, district election officers, political parties and candidates will get the updated list tomorrow. The electors whose cases are approved by the tribunals will be informed through their both-level officers," he said.

Earlier, EC had reported a fresh enrolment of around 5 lakh voters after the publication of the final rolls on Feb 28, taking the state's total voter count to 6.8 crore, which was a 10.9% drop in the number of voters compared to the pre-SIR count of over 7.6 crore. The count is likely to increase after the names cleared by 19 tribunals — set up on SC's order to hear appeals against deletion of names from the rolls — are added to the list.

More women than men reported falling ill



▶ Continued from page 1

Survey data shows the out-of-pocket expenditure in case of hospitalisation has increased nearly 70%, underlining the everyday health burden faced by millions in the country.

In 2025, one in eight Indians (13.1%) reported being ill in the last 15 days — up from 7.5% in the previous survey period. More women reported falling ill (14.4%) than their male counterparts (11.8%), a trend that has sustained since the last survey.

The survey data shows Illness rises sharply with age, as 43.9% of those aged 60 and above reported experiencing illness in the past 15 days (27.7% in 2017-18), while 22.5% reported experiencing illness in the 45–59 age group (11.4% in 2017-18).

Although hospitalisation rates remain relatively moderate at 2.9 cases per 100 persons annually, with urban areas (3.2%) reporting slightly higher rates than rural areas (2.7%), treatment costs continue to weigh heavily on households, notes the survey.

The average out-of-pocket expenditure per hospitalisation stands at Rs 34,064, from Rs 20,135 in the 2017-18 period, as per the survey.

Significantly, the survey showed that govt-sponsored health insurance coverage in India has expanded sharply in the past decade, as it now covers about 47% of the rural population and 44% in urban areas, up from 14% and 19% respectively in 2017-18.

Gorkha solution, safe border, jobs: Shah's 3-pt pitch in Bengal

Rohit Khanna, Roshan Gupta & Sujoy Khanra | TNN

@AmitShah

POLLS AHEAD: Union home minister Amit Shah plays drum at a public meeting at Chandipur on Tuesday

Kolkata/Sukna/Salboni/Kulti: Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday promised a "solution" to the long-standing concerns of the Go-rkha community within six months if BJP assumed office in West Bengal, while also vowing to revive the stalled Jindal Group steel project in Salboni "at the earliest".

Speaking in Kulti, he said, "Election Commission has deployed CAPF in sufficient numbers. I warn Mamata Banerjee's goons that if they try to disturb the poll process, I will ensure they are hung upside down on May 4... and straighten them out once and for all."

At Sukna near Siliguri, Shah reiterated BJP's outreach to the hills. Union home minister Amit Shah alleged that names of several Gorkhas were deleted from electoral rolls. "We will add their names to the voter list the day BJP assumes office," he said.

At Salboni, the home minister brought up the Jindal Steel and Power plant. Land was acquired during the tenure of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee as CM, but the project faltered amid security and raw material issues. "Only Modi-ji can complete the project," Amit Shah said.

He pledged to restore Kulti's status as a premier iron ore production hub. At Chandipur, he promised 1 lakh jobs every year under a BJP govt.

Shah sharpened his pitch on border security. Calling the polls a fight to "free Bengal from infiltrators and Rohingyas", he said BJP would seal borders with Bangladesh within 45 days of forming govt. He reiterated BJP's co-mmitment to implementing a uniform civil code in Bengal.

Shah's 'Eyy Didi' remark stirs storm ahead of polls

Dwaipayan Ghosh & Rohit Khanna | TNN

Kolkata: A drawl before "Didi" call from home minister Amit Shah on Monday, while referring to Bengal CM **Mamata Banerjee**, drew an angry reaction from her party Trinamool, which found it oddly reminiscent of PM Modi's 2021 "Didi, O Didi" taunt.

Shah was addressing a rally in West Midnapore's Salboni when he said: "Eyy Didi, listen carefully, Bengal is in India. We will not let any Kabir or Akbar build a Babri Masjid."

Abhishek Banerjee took to X to post the clipping of Shah's rally and said, "PM and HM speak about Nari Shakti. They posture on women's empowerment and perform outrage for the cameras. But their conduct tells a different story. The PM publicly mocks a woman CM with 'Didi O Didi,' delivered with visible condescension. He echoes it with 'Eyy Didi,' reducing a respected neta to a taunt."

Practice is different yet it is based on faith, says top court

▶ Continued from page 1

Advocate Gopal Subramanium agreed with Justice Nagarathna and said that while secular practices of a religious institution are amenable to judicial scrutiny, religious practices enjoyed constitutional protection, except when they are in breach of public order, morality or health.

Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah said if a practice was secular or religious would have to be determined by the court on a case-to-case basis. Justice P B Varale asked, "Would it mean that with advancement in technology and spread of education, the community collectively cannot change or reform a particular religious practice?"

The question was supplemented by Justice Joymalya Bagchi, who asked, "If a religious practice is unique to a denomination and is held sacrosanct, will it prohibit debate within the community to bring about changes in the practice?" Giri said, "A person goes to a temple to worship if he has belief and faith in the deity. If he goes to a temple to worship the deity, he cannot object or question the customs and beliefs attached to the deity worshipped by the community, which alone can bring about changes in the customs."

Justice R Mahadevan said, "Faith is faith. Practice is different yet it is based on faith." Appearing for a religious association, advocate Sai Deepak said the majority verdict in case erred by equating ban on entry of women of menstrual age into the temple because of unique attributes of Ayyappan with practicing of 'untouchability'.

He said when the Constitution through Art 17 abolished untouchability and made it a penal offence, it had only social or caste-based untouchability in mind and not ritualistic purity. He argued diverse religious spaces dedicated to specific forms of deities, resulting in restricting access to believers of a certain class or section or group without reference to caste, cannot be treated as attracting the prohibition of Article 17.

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Last date for receipt of applications is **17.30 hrs.** on **20.05.2026.** Applications received after the last date will not be entertained and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.

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Note:
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Note: Corrigendum & addendum, if any, will be published at www.ncfe.org.in

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Interested entities are required to collect the RFP document (containing the complete Scope of Services) through their authorised representative, in writing, from the KSCA Office at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Cubbon Road, Bengaluru – 560 001, during office hours (10:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Saturday), commencing **Wednesday, 22nd April 2026,** upon payment of the RFP document fee. Completed proposals in sealed envelopes, along with all required supporting documents, must be submitted on or before 3:00 PM on Saturday 2nd May 2026.

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Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL, Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 3-phase, 50 cycles, outdoor type, oil immersed, naturally cooled, Stack core type construction, OWP Aluminium Wound Distribution Transformers (Type Conventional) of capacity 63 KVA (non-star and star 1 rated transformers (as per old bee ratings) purchased upto 31.03.2011) with voltage ratio 11/0.433 KV conforming to ISS: 2026 (with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part-1 (2014) complete with a first filling of oil conforming to ISS: 335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 7000 Nos.

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.04.2026 from 04:00 P.M. onwards.

NOTE:- Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in.

C 505/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/10697

RAIL LAND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

(A Statutory Authority under Ministry of Railways Government of India)
Unit No. 702-B, 7th Floor, Konnectus Tower-II, DMRC Building, Ajmeri Gate, New Delhi-110002

REQUEST FOR EMPANELMENT THROUGH E-TENDER
(RFE Notice No. RLDA/RFE/CT-07 of 2026 Dated 16.04.2026)

"Request for Empanelment (RFE) for Consolidated empanelment of Architectural Consultant for Station Redevelopment Projects, Colony Sites, Commercial Sites, MFC, Master Planning of Railway Colonies & Self-Development Projects 2026."

Name of Work	Bid Document Fee
Consolidated empanelment of Architectural Consultant for Station Redevelopment Projects, Colony Sites, MFC, Master Planning of Railway Colonies & Self- Development Projects 2026.	Rs. 11,800/- (i/c GST@18%) (Non-refundable)

Last date of Downloading of e-RFE Document for participation submission Online : 04.05.2026 up to 23:59 Hrs.
(Any details to be obtained from Joint General Manager/Project-5)
Last date of submission of application for empanelment : 05.05.2026 up to 15:00 Hrs.

For further details of the project, please visit our website https://rida.indianrailways.gov.in or on e-procurement Portal https://www.tenderwizard.in/RLDA under the heading tender/'e-tender'.

For any clarifications, may please contact:-

Joint General Manager/Expert/Tender	Sh. Rahul Singhal	For e-bid queries:
jgmt.exprt@rida.railnet.gov.in	Joint General Manager/Project-5 M: 9717763386 jgm5rida@gmail.com	Mr. Mayank Singh M: 8800115628 mayank.s@etenderwizard.com

Note:- All applicants who have already submitted their applications against the RFE no. RFP Notice No: RLDA/RFE/CT-14 of 2025 floated on 16.06.2025 are not required to apply afresh. However, in case any applicant wishes to revise or update their proposal, they may do so during the re-opened submission window as a fresh.

JGM/Expert/Tender, (M) 9711305031

Government of Karnataka

KARNATAKA EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY

18th cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru-560 012
Tel: 080 - 23361786, 23564583, Fax: 080-23461576
Mail ID: keaauthority-ka@nic.in / keaacts2013@gmail.com

No.:ED/KEA/STORES/CR-04/2025-26 Date: 19/04/2026

SHORT TERM E – TENDER NOTIFICATION

KARNATAKA EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY for its e-procurement invites short term E-Tender in **two Bid System for "Supply, Installation & Maintenance of Laptops to KEA".** Tender reference no. KEACET/2026-27/IND0019 Dated: 19/04/2026.

The interested eligible Bidders shall download the tender documents from the Government of Karnataka e-Governance platform: **https//kppp.karnataka.gov.in** and submit its E-Bids on or **before 27-04-2026 before 05.15 p.m.**

Sd/-
Executive Director - KEA

DIPR/CP/RO272/AAPL/2026-27

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity No. : U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact number 9646118721)

Tender Enquiry No.QW-345/PO-W **Dated 20.04.2026**

Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL, Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 3-phase, 50 cycles, outdoor type, oil immersed, naturally cooled, Stack core type construction, OWP Aluminium Wound Distribution Transformers (Type Conventional) of capacity 100 KVA (non-star and star 1 rated transformers (as per old bee ratings) purchased upto 31.03.2011) with voltage ratio 11/0.433 KV conforming to ISS: 2026(with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part-1 (2014) complete with a first filling of oil conforming to ISS: 335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 2500 Nos.

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.04.2026 from 04:00 P.M. onwards.

NOTE:- Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in.

C 506/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/10698

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity No. : U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact number 9646118721)

Tender Enquiry No.QW-343/PO-W **Dated 20.04.2026**

Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL, Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 10 KVA, OWP, Aluminium Wound, Distribution Transformers with voltage ratio (11000/ √ 3)/(250 or 240) V, outdoor type, oil immersed, naturally cooled, stack/wound/amorphous core type construction conforming to ISS: 2026 (with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part-1 (2014) complete with first filling of oil conforming to ISS: 335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 3000 Nos.

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.04.2026 from 04:00 P.M. onwards.

NOTE:- Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in.

C 504/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/10696

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity No. : U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact number 9646118721)

Tender Enquiry No.QW-346/PO-W **Dated 20.04.2026**

Chief Engineer/Stores & Workshops Organization, Sarabha Nagar, PSPCL Ludhiana, invites E-tender of Repair of 3-phase, 50 cycles, outdoor type, oil immersed naturally cooled, Stack core type construction, OWP Aluminium Wound Distribution Transformers (Type Conventional) of capacity 200 KVA with voltage ratio 11/0.433 KV conforming to ISS: 2026 (with latest amendments, if any) and 1180 part-1 (2014) complete with a first filling of oil conforming to ISS: 335/1993 (with latest amendments, if any)

Quantity = 800 Nos.

For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.04.2026 from 04:00 P.M. onwards.

NOTE:- Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in.

C 507/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/10699

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, GOVERNMENT OF UTTAR PRADESH,

Room No. 324, Bapu Bhawan, Vidhan Shabha Marg, Lucknow (UP) 226001, India

ADVERTISEMENT NO- 01/2026 (Amended)

Department of Energy, Government of Uttar Pradesh invites on-line application for the following posts:-

SL. NO.	NAME OF THE POST	NAME OF CORPORATION/ DISCOM	NO. OF VACANCY
1-	Director (Distribution)	U.P.Power Corporation Ltd. Lucknow	1
2-	Director (Commercial)	Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd., Agra	1
3-	Director (Technical)	Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd., Varanasi	1
4-	Director (Commercial)	Paschimanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd., Meerut	1
5-	Director (Technical)	Paschimanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd., Meerut	1
6-	Director (Finance)	Paschimanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd., Meerut	1
7-	Director (Commercial)	Kesco Ltd. Kanpur	1
8-	Director (Finance)	U.P Power Transmission Corporation Ltd., Lucknow	1
9-	Director (Operation)	U.P Power Transmission Corporation Ltd., Lucknow	1

Last date of application is 15-05-2026, 2026 till 5 P.M.

Details & qualifying conditions for all posts including newly added post of Director (Operation), UPPTCL and online application is available on the website: **www.uppcl.org**

The following information will generally be sought in application form on website.

(The indicative format is only for reference). Basic details (Name, father's/Husband name, age, address, email, mobile no. etc.) educational qualifications details, work experience, details of your vision and achievement in past organizations.

RO No. : 6, Dated 21 April 2026.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
A.P. TOWNSHIP & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

Block-2, besides CRDA New Building, Rayapudi, Amaravati

Name of the work: APTIDCO Circle - APTIDCO- Construction of Balance Physical Infrastructure such as Internal Roads, Storm Water rains, Water Supply, Sewerage Network, Septic Tank etc., in the approved layouts at Pamidi, Gooty, Hindupur, Puttaparthi, Kadiri, Anantapuramu and Rayadurgam in Anantapur District under Phase-II & III AHP-PMAY-HFA (U) with 2 years defect liability period under Lump sum Contract - Reg (% percentage tender).-**Publication of E-Tender Notice for the work relates to Kurnool Circle-Requested- Reg.**
ECV Amount:- **Rs.62,47,56,700.00** for **Ananthapuramu** District, Kurnool Division

E-Procurement Notice

Tender Notice No : NIT.No: 10/Ananthapuramu Infra/DCTO/Kurnool/ APTIDCO/2025-26 Dated:22-04-2026 (2nd Call)

No. of Works	01
Bid Document Downloading Start Date	21.04.2026 @ 11:00 Hrs
Bid Document Downloading Close Date	07.05.2026 @ 14:00 Hrs
Last Date and Time for Receipt of Bids	07.05.2026 @ 17:00 Hrs
Financial Bid Opening Date	08.05.2026 @17.00 Hrs

Name & Address of the Concerned Officer: Officer Office of the Superintending Engineer, D.No.81/347-F-4-1, 1st Floor, Ward No.81, Vidya Nagar Colony, MPFA Manzil Building, Plot No.30, V.V.S. Function Hall Road, near Gooty Road, Kurnool-518003.

The details can be seen in website **http://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in** thereof contact No: **9701644955**

Sd/- 20.04.2026, **Managing Director, APTIDCO, Amaravati**

DIPR No: 5037PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22 Dt:21/04/2026

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

CPM/GSU/Chakradharpur, South Eastern Railway acting for and on behalf of President of India invites E-Tenders against open Tender. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Tender Notice No.: CKP-GSU-26-27-2, Dated: 18.04.2026. Name of work:** Provision of safety fencing along the track by Metal Beam Crash Barrier, Fixed Knots fencing Bezinal-2000, Prestressed concrete and by brick work with RCC Columns from Km 233.880 to 515.117 km (Total 281.237 Tkm (-) 13.57 Tkm [(i) Bondamunda A cabin to D cabin and Bondamunda A (4.25 Tkm) (ii) Sonakhan- Sogra (5.0 Tkm) (iii) Bagdehi-Dhutra (4.32 Tkm)]} between Asanboni-Jharsuguda station. **Tender Value:** ₹ 193,55,34,078.71. **EMD:** ₹ 3,87,10,700. **Cost of Tender form:** ₹ 0. **Date of Opening:** 15.05.2026. **Period of Completion:** 12 Months. The tender can be viewed at website **http://www.ireps.gov.in**. The tenderer/bidders must have class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. **Note:** e-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (Authority– Railway Board's letter no. 2020/CE-I/CT/3E/GCC/Policy dtd. 16.07.2020). **(PR-67)**

कार्यालयः नगर निगम, गोरखपुर

पत्रांकः- 47/मु.अभि./चार-सा.नि.वि./2026-27 दिनांकः 21.04.2026

शुद्धि-पत्र

दिनांक 03.04.2026 को प्रकाशित निविदा सूचना के संबंध में यह सूचित किया जाता है कि कुछ प्रशासनिक/तकनीकी कारणों से निविदा जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि को संशोधित तथा धरोहर धनराशि एवं अनुमति लागत में निम्नानुसार संशोधन किया गया है। संशोधित तिथियाँ एवं विवरण निम्नानुसार हैं:-

क्र. सं.	नगर निगम	पैकेज सं.	अन्तर्निहित मार्ग	मार्ग की लम्बाई मी.में	अनुमानित लागत जी.एस.टी. रहित (रू. लाख में) निर्माण	5 सालों का अनुरक्षण	कार्य की सम्पूर्ण अनुमानित लागत (रू. लाख में)	निर्माण धरोहर धनराशि (लाख रू. में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि (माह में)	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य जी.एस.टी. सहित (रू.)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	गोरखपुर	GKP/CMG/Ph3/Sup-01	बेतियाहाता चौक से अलहदादपुर तिराहा, टी. डी. एम. तिराहे से ट्रांसपोर्ट नगर तक एवं रेन बसेरा रोड से एन.एच. 28 तक।	2200	5277.58	71.33	5348.91	107.00	15	59000.00
2		GKP/CMG/Ph3/Sup-02	टी.डी.एम. तिराहे से पंडिय हाता पुलिस चौकी होते हुए महेवा चुंगी एवं बर्फखाना रोड से हौबर्ट बंधा तक।	1900	5151.20	64.95	5216.15	104.50	15	59000.00
3		GKP/CMG/Ph3/Sup-03	अलहदादपुर तिराहे से रायगंज होते हुए घंटा घर तक।	1000	2143.20	22.96	2166.16	43.50	12	23600.00
4		-	कुशीनगर बाईपास साहब यादव के मकान से उमेश मिश्रा के प्लाट तक सड़क चौड़ीकरण का कार्य।	1785	999.17	-	999.17	10.00	12	11800.00

क.सं.	विवरण	पूर्व तिथि	संशोधित तिथि
1	प्री बिड मिटिंग (ऑनलाइन)	-	27.04.2026 @ 12:00 PM
2	निविदा जमा करने की अन्तिम तिथि/समय	24.04.2026 @ 05:00 PM	04.05.2026 @ 05:00 PM
3	निविदा खोलने की तिथि/समय	25.04.2026 @ 11:00 AM	05.05.2026 @ 11:00 AM

अन्य सभी शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी।
यह शुद्धि पत्र निविदा दस्तावेज का अभिन्न हिस्सा माना जाएगा।

अधिशासी अभियन्ता
नगर निगम, गोरखपुर

उच्च शिक्षा निदेशालय, उत्तराखण्ड

नवाड़खेड़ा गौलापार, हल्द्वानी (नैनीताल) पिन-263126
मोबाईल: 9997686960 E-Mail-highereducation.director@gmail.com

दिनांक 21.04.2026

ई-निविदा

उच्च शिक्षा विभागान्तर्गत मुख्यमंत्री युवा भविष्य निर्माण योजना संचालित किये जाने हेतु राज्याधीन विश्वविद्यालयों एवं शासकीय तथा अनुदानित महाविद्यालयों में उच्च शिक्षा ग्रहण कर रहे छात्रों हेतु **सिविल सर्विसेज (UPSC/PSC)** की प्रतियोगी परीक्षा की कोचिंग हेतु देश के विभिन्न प्रतिष्ठित उच्च शिक्षण संस्थानों से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। इससे सम्बन्धित सभी सूचनायें **http//www.uktenders.gov.in** पर उपलब्ध है। आमंत्रण ई-निविदा का विवरण निम्नवत् है:-

क्र0सं0	विवरण	दिनांक
1	पोर्टल में निविदा उपलब्ध होने की तिथि	23 अप्रैल, 2026
2	निविदा हेतु प्री बिड सम्मेलन	30 अप्रैल, 2026
3	प्री बिड में उठाए गए बिन्दुओं पर स्पष्टीकरण	04 मई, 2026
4	निविदा जमा (Online) करने की अन्तिम तिथि	14 मई, 2026 सांय 5.00 बजे तक
5	निविदा प्रपत्र की उपलब्धता	**http//www.uktenders.gov.in**
6	निविदा की तकनीकी प्रस्ताव खोले जाने की तिथि व समय	18 मई, 2026 पूर्वान्ह 11.00 बजे
7	निविदा के वित्तीय प्रस्ताव खोले जाने की सम्भावित तिथि	22 मई, 2026 पूर्वान्ह 11.00 बजे

निदेशक, उच्च शिक्षा,
उत्तराखण्ड हल्द्वानी।

32001/91/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
O/o THE CHIEF ENGINEER AND BASIN MANAGER,
MAHANADI BASIN, AT-BURLA, DISTRICT-SAMBALPUR, PIN-768017
E-mail Id - cebmumbburla@gmail.com
'e' Procurement Notice No-CE & BM-MB-47/2026-27 (Online)
BID IDENTIFICATION NO- CE & BM-MB-47/2026-27 (Online)

1	Name of the work	:	Renovation of Canal System of Hirakud Dam Project (Adgaon Canal Section, Bargarh Irrigation Division, Bargarh).
2	No of works	:	One (01) number
3	Class of contractor	:	"A Class" and "Special Class"
4	Bid identification No	:	CE&BM-MB-47/2026-27 (Online)
5	Estimated cost	:	Rs. 19.78 Crores
6	Period of completion	:	24 (Twenty-Four) Calendar Months
7	Date and time of availability of Bid Documents in the portal	:	Dated-27.04.2026 at 11.30 AM to Dated- 18.05.2026 up to 5.00 PM.
8	Last date/time for receipt of Bids in the portal	:	Dated- 18.05.2026 up to 5.00 PM.
9	Date of opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)	:	Dated-19.05.2026 at 11.30 AM, O/o Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi Basin, Burla
10	Name and Address of the Officer inviting Bid	:	Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi Basin, Burla, Dist-Sambalpur, Odisha,768017, Email Id: **cebmumbburla@gmail.com**

1. Any addendum/corrigendum/ cancellation/ erratum of tender can also be seen in the said website.
2. Further details can be seen from Government Website **http://tendersodisha.gov.in**.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Mahanadi Basin, Burla
OIPR-32001/32508/1/26-27/0001

25001/41/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF
RURAL WORKS, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR

Unit-IV, Sachivalay Marg
Bhubaneshwar-751001
Fax. 0674-2394705
E-mail: cerw_bbsr@yahoo.com

Letter No. 13700 Date: 20.04.2026

2nd corrigendum

Bid Identification No-Online - 04/2025-26 (Bridges) invited vide this office letter No 9221, dated 17.03.2026

Partial modification has been made to the TCN of Bid Identification No-Online-04/2025-26 (Bridges) invited vide this office letter no. 9221, dated 17.03.2026 for the bridge work at Sl No. 01 i.e. Construction of H.L. Bridge over river "JEERA" AT- 1.10 K.M. on Kuisira to Urduna RD road under SBY in the District of Bargarh, due to unavoidable circumstances.

Sl No	Item	Time schedule as per original TCN	Time schedule as per 1st corrigendum notice	Time schedule as per 2nd corrigendum notice
1	Availability of Tender online for bidding	31.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 16.04.2026 up to 05.00 PM	10.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 27.04.2026 up to 05.00 PM	22.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 12.05.2026 up to 05.00 PM
2	Last Date and time of seeking tender clarification if any	15.04.2026 up to 02.00 PM	24.04.2026 up to 02.00 PM	08.05.2026 up to 02.00 PM
3	Date & time of opening of technical bid	17.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	28.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	13.05.2026 at 11.00 A.M.

All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Buildings & Bridges)
Rural Works, Odisha, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-25001/25123/1/26-27/0001

14001/10/2627

STATE COUNCIL FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION & VOCATIONAL TRAINING, ODISHA.

ଟେକ୍‌ନିକାଲ୍ ଏଡୁକେସନ୍ ଓ ଭୋକେସନାଲ୍ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ପରିଷଦ, ଓଡିଶା

SCTE&VT, ODISHA

vcsctevt.odisha@gmail.com, Unit-VIII, BBSR, Odisha-751012, 0674-2392913
RFP No. 784 Dated : 20.04.2026

State Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (SCTE&VT), Odisha. (The Client) invites proposals from the eligible bidders through e-tender process for "Selection of Agency for Printing and Supply of Bar Coded & QR Coded 32 Pages Answer Books (26 rolled pages, 04 Graph pages & 02 plane pages)". Bidders fulfilling the prescribed eligibility criteria of the RFP can access and download the complete RFP Document and other details from **www.tendersodisha.gov.in / https://sctevt.odisha.gov.in**

The major events under the bid process are :

Sr. No.	List of Key Events	Critical Dates
1	Date of Issue of RFP(e-tender)	23.04.2026
2	Deadline for Submission of Pre-Bid Query	29.04.2026 (by 2:30 PM)
3	Date of Pre-Bid Meeting at SCTE&VT Conference Hall	30.04.2026 (at 03.30 PM)
4	Due date for submission of Bid	21.05.2026 (by 5:00 PM)
5	Date of opening of Technical Bid	22.05.2026 (at 11.00 AM)
6	Date of Opening of Financial Bid	To be communicated later
7	Method of Selection	Two bid system i.e., technical and financial bids
8	Mode of Submission	Online (e-tender) **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

The Bid complete in all respect must be applied through e-tender process latest by 21.05.2026 (by 5:00 PM) clearly mentioning "REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL for Selection of Agency for Printing and Supply of Bar Coded & QR Coded 32 Pages Answer Books (26 rolled pages, 04 Graph pages & 02 plane pages)". The proposals received beyond the last date and time will be rejected without assigning any reason. In case of any further modification/ alteration/ amendment shall be published in the websites only. The authority reserves all the rights to reject any / all proposals at any stage without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-
VC, SCTE&VT
OIPR - 14001/14049/1/26-27/0001

Directorate of Medical Education

BMC&RI (Old Building), 1st Floor, Fort, K.R. Road,
Bengaluru - 560002. Phone: 080-22870060 Fax: 080-22875798
E-mail: dmekarnataka@yahoo.com

No: DME/KCMMR/FD-01/2026-27 **Date: 21-04-2026**

INVITATION FOR E-AUCTION
(Through E-Procurement Portal Only)

Directorate of Medical Education invites e-Auction from **Public Sector Banks for Investment of its Surplus Funds of KCMMR Society.**

Date of e-Auction Notification Dt: 21-04-2026

Last Date to Upload the Eligibility Criteria in Annexure-A and Declaration in Annexure-B in the e-Portal Dt: 28-04-2026 on or before 16.00 Hrs.

Live Bidding Dt: 30-04-2026
Commences at 10.00 Hours and Concludes at 16.00 Hours.

Further details may be obtained from the above office and from Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in at Auctions.**

Sd/- Member Secretary
Karnataka Chief Minister's Medical Relief Society & Director of Medical Education, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/270/Advert/2026-27

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHANDIGARH

TENDER NOTICE

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Bid Submission Schedule (Online)	Opening Technical Bid (Online)
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - Hort. Division No. 2			
1.	Operation and Watch and Ward of Fountains in various Green Belts/Parks at various locations under the jurisdiction of SDE MCPH Sub Divn. No.19, Chandigarh under Revenue Head. Amount : Rs.98,41,104/- Time Limit : 12 Months Earnest Money : Rs.1,96,822/- Tender Fee : Rs. 3000/-	21.04.2026 at 5.30 P.M To 28.04.2026 at 3.00 P.M.	28.04.2026 at 3.00 P.M.
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - SWM Division			
2.	Strengthening of Storm Water Drainage System by providing and Laying of Additional RCC NP-2 pipe line along with construction of new machine holes & road gullies including up-gradation of road gullies in Ward No. 34 (Sector-45 & 46), Chandigarh. Approx. Amount: Rs. 1,28,78,169/- Earnest Money: Rs. 2,57,563/- Time Period: 06 Months Tender Fee: Rs. 3,000/-	22.04.2026 at 9:00 A.M To 04.05.2026 at 10:30 A.M	04.05.2026 at 11:00 A.M

Note :- 1) Tender Notice alongwith detailed terms and conditions is available/uploaded on website at www.chandigarh.gov.in or etenders.chd.nic.in

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
Hort. Division No.2, M.C. Chandigarh and
SWM Division, Room No. 612, 6th Floor, New Deluxe Building, MC Sector-17, Chandigarh email id : mcc.swm2020@gmail.com

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BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Office of the Deputy General Manager-2, 1st Floor, BBMP Building,
Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru-560052. Email:bswmlee4@gmail.com

No. DGM-2/BSWML/Tend/01/26-27 **Date: 21.04.2026**

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT)

(Through GOK KPP Only)

The Deputy General Manager-2, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited on behalf of the Managing Director, BSWML, Bengaluru invites tender from eligible tenderers for the Project management consultancy services for the work mentioned in the table below. The tenderers may submit tenders for services through KPP portal of the Government of Karnataka (viz. https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in). The tenderers are advised to note the minimum qualification criteria specified is as per standard bid document. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Project Cost (Rs. In Lakhs)	Duration (Including Monsoon)	EMD Amount in Rs.
1	Appointment of PMC for the work of MSW Resource Recovery Support and Surrounding Area Infrastructure Works in Mahadevapura Constituency, including facilitation for organic manure production and essential basic infrastructure in and around MSW/legacy waste influence zones.	7205.14	11 Months	1,44,000/-

Calendar of Events:

1. Pre bid Meeting: 02.05.2026 at 15.00 Hrs at the office of CE & CGM (Tech), BSWML, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanthnagar, Bengaluru.
2. Last date for submission of the bids: 11.05.2026 upto 16.00 Hrs.
3. Date of opening of Technical bid on: 12.05.2026 at 16.30 Hrs.
4. Date of opening of Financial bids to be notified to technically qualified bidders.

Sd/-
Deputy General Manager-2
BSWML

DIPR/CP/285/AKAR/2026-27

Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation Ltd.

(Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
KMDC Bhavan, No.32/821, 2nd Floor, Subedhar Chatram Road,
Opp. Sheshadripuram Police Station, Sheshadripuram, Bengaluru-560 020.

No.K.M.D.C/CR/P. N/2026-27/119 **Date: 21.04.2026**

E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation Ltd., Bengaluru invites e-tenders from eligible contractors/agencies for providing services under various schemes for the financial year 2026–27, namely the Community Based Training Scheme, provision of services related to the Corporation's DCM software and drilling of borewells in Bagalkot District under the Ganga Kalyan Scheme. The tender details are as follows:

Sl. No.	TENDER NO	Program/Service Name	Estimated amount Rs. (in lakhs)
1.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0027	INDUSTRY READY FUTURE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM IN IT / ITeS IN ASSOCIATION WITH C- DAC FOR **BANGALORE DISTRICT.**	392.00
2.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0028	INDUSTRY READY FUTURE SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM IN IT / ITeS IN ASSOCIATION WITH C- DAC FOR **KALBURGI & MANGALORE DISTRICT.**	280.00
3.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0029	REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT (DRONE TRAINING) IN **BANGALORE DISTRICT.**	95.00
4.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0030	REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT (DRONE TRAINING) **BELGAVI DISTRICT.**	142.50
5.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0031	CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANTS. **(CIMA)** ON LINE COACHING.	43.50
6.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0032	SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM IN **GRAPHIC DESIGNER**	14.00
7.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0033	SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM IN **LAB TECHNICIAN**	14.00
8.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0034	SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM IN **BRIDAL FASHION PORTFOLIO & MAKE UP ARTIST**	14.00
9.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0035	SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING PROGRAM IN **SELF EMPLOYED TAILOR**	14.00
10.	KMDCL/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT 78/CALL 3	DRILLING OF 165MM DIA BOREWELL UNDER GANGA KALYANA SCHEME ON "NO WATER NO MONEY BASIS" IN BAGALKOTE DISTRICT PAKAGE NO:14 CALL- FOR THE YEAR 2025-26	72.13
11.	KMDCL/2026-27/SE0036	Tender Invitation for Selection of Firm for "Implementation of DCB (Demand, Collection & Balance) Solution with Historical Data Digitization (FY 2013-14 to 2024-25), Loan Account Creation and Integration with Loan & Subsidy Management System"	180.00

Starting date for submission of tenders: 21.04.2026, Last date for submission of tender: 06.05.2026

For detailed information, please visit **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/. The Pre-Bid Meeting** will be held on **28.04.2026 at 03:00 p.m.** at KMDC Bhavan, Seshadripuram, Head Office of the Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation, Bengaluru. For further information, please contact **Tel: 080-22860999.** In case of any clarification, the General Manager, Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation Limited (KMDCL), Bengaluru, may be contacted.

Sd/-
Managing Director and Tender Inviting Authority

DIPR/CP/RO273/AAPL/2026-27

Entering JEE (Advanced) pool only getting tougher

Trend of more aspirants crowding the top percentile band underlines a structural shift in India's engg entrance landscape where even marginal score differences now determine access to next stage

Manash Gohain & Hemali Chhapia | TNN

New Delhi: The bar for entering IITs has steadily risen, with JEE (Main) cut-off for making it to JEE (Advanced) for general category climbing to a record 93.4 percentile in 2026, up from 89.7 in 2019, reflecting intensifying competition and a sharp post-pandemic surge in high scorers.

Cut-offs across all other categories — EWS, OBC-NCL, SC and ST — as well have risen sharply over the past few years to a record high this year, with no category showing a reversal in the latest cycle.

Eight-year data from National Testing Agency (NTA) released between 2019 and 2026 show that while the general cut-off stood at 89.7 percentile in 2019, it remained largely in 88–91 range till 2023 before witnessing a steep jump to 93.1 in 2025 and further this year. The EWS cut-off has increased from 78.2 in 2019 to over 82 in 2026, while OBC-NCL has moved from 74.3 to around 80.9. For SC candidates, the threshold has climbed from 54 to nearly 64, and for ST candidates from 44.3 to about 52. In percentage terms, this translates into increases of roughly 4–10 percentile points across categories over the period. The pandemic years had seen a brief dip. In 2021, general cut-off fell to 87.8, before rising to 88.4 percentile in 2022, amid disruptions and multiple exam attempts. However, the cut-off has risen by nearly five percentile points in three years since then.

This trend coincides with a surge in number of candidates. Unique registrations have grown from about 11–12 lakh in 2019–20 to over 15 lakh in 2025–26. The increase in number of candidates has outpaced expansion in available seats during the same period. There is a quiet shift underway in ambitions of India's engineering aspirants, and IIT Hyderabad director B S Murthy finds it encouraging. "Everyone wants a seat in an IIT now," he said, noting that this has pushed students to work harder and aim higher." Yet, Murthy voiced a measured concern: the need to draw more students to core engineering disciplines.

For IIT Madras alumnus and centre head at Narayana CO campus, Nerul, Bhushan Jamsandekar, the change is evident not just in performance, but in how early the journey now begins. Students, he noted, are approaching preparation with greater structure and intent, often starting well before traditional timelines.

A key driver of this shift is rising interest in national-level Olympiads and foundational programmes, which are no longer confined to metro cities. "If you look at number of students preparing for Olympiads today, it's not just from urban centres," he says. "Even small towns across India are seeing a significant surge."

'Stress-free, zero-error' exams in focus for NTA, says Pradhan

Manash.Gohain
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Signalling the next phase of reforms to be undertaken by the National Testing Agency, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan told TOI the focus will be on creating a "stress free exam", alongside developing a global-standard SOP for conducting "zero error exams".

"This (stress free exam) is the biggest challenge before the NTA, and we are working towards a globally benchmarked system," he said.

The minister said the agency currently conducts tests for over one crore candidates annually and will have to "face the challenges and progress from the experiences so far". "With over one crore candidates appearing in NTA exams, we must continuously learn from experience, address gaps, and strengthen systems to deliver fair, transparent and reliable assessments," he said.

The reforms come in the backdrop of the NEET-UG 2024 episode involving allegations of paper leaks, the cancellation of UGC-NET in June 2024, and postponements of CSIR-NET and NEET-PG.

2 more tigers found dead in MP's Panna, Kanha

Amarjeet.Singh1
@timesofindia.com

Bhopal: Two more tiger deaths in Madhya Pradesh — one at Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR) and another in Kanha Tiger (KTR) Reserve — pushed the state's tiger death toll to 23 so far this year, raising fresh concerns over wildlife safety and monitoring.

In PTR, an adult tiger was found dead during routine patrolling in Vanmarg sanctuary area Tuesday. Officials said the decomposed carcass was around 20-25 days old, making it difficult to ascertain the cause of death immediately.

A group of veterinarians and senior forest officials inspected the spot, even as an STF team was summoned in to probe the case from all possible angles, including poaching. Efforts were underway to establish the tiger's identity, and dog squads and forensic experts were roped in to collect evidence.

PTR field director Brijesh Srivastava said all findings would be analysed before arriving at any conclusion regarding the cause of death. The delay in detection also raised questions over surveillance and protection mechanisms inside the reserve.

Meanwhile, a male tiger cub was found dead in KTR's Sarhi range on Tuesday. Forest teams immediately secured the site and initiated action following NTCA guidelines. A dog squad was deployed, and a post-mortem exam was conducted by a team of wildlife health experts and veterinary officers.

Officials said all organs of the cub were found intact, and preliminary findings indicated a natural death. The carcass was later disposed of following standard protocol in the presence of senior forest officials, NTCA representatives and local administration officials.

The twin fatalities came close on the heels of multiple tiger deaths reported earlier this year, including in Bandhavgarh, where several tigers died allegedly due to territorial fights and other causes.

2 women killed in bison attack in J'khand

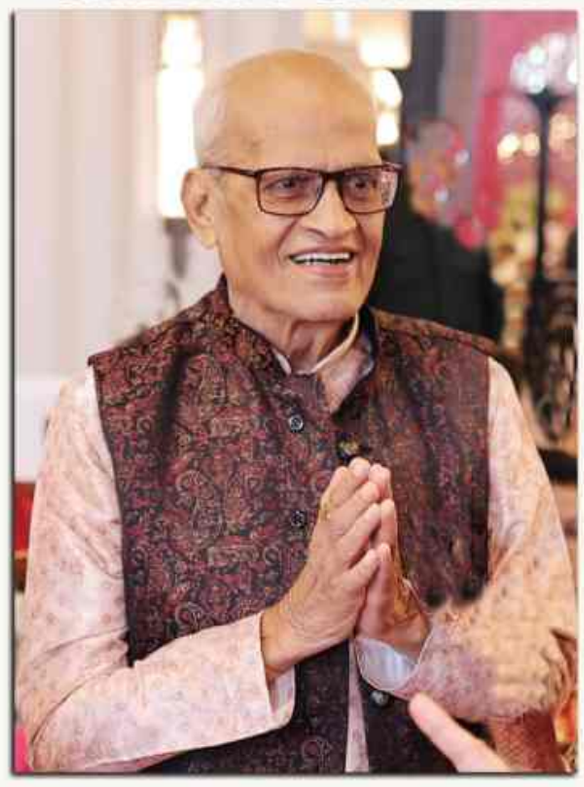
M F Ahmad | TNN

Daltonganj: Two women were killed and another was injured in a bison (gaur) attack in a forest under Barwadeeh block in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Monday, foresters said on Tuesday.

The deceased are Shila Maniya Devi, 64, of Morwai Kala village, and Shanti Devi, 54, of Morwai Khurd. Chhato Devi, who was injured, was admitted to Medinirai Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) in Daltonganj. Doctors there said her condition is stable.

Ajay Toppo, Barwadeeh's range officer, said the three women went to collect mahua fruits on Monday. "Chhato, who hails from Lat village, took the village dogs with her. When they came across four bison in the forest, the dogs began to bark incessantly due to which three of them dispersed but a male adult gaur attacked her," he said.

ARHAM
SMRITI SABHA



It is with profound grief and deep sorrow that we announce the passing of

Shri. Surendra Kumar Gandhi

(12th July 1945 – 20th April 2026)

FOUNDER CHAIRMAN, GANDHI GROUP OF COMPANIES
KEMS FORGINGS LIMITED, KEMS AUTO COMPONENTS LIMITED,
KEMS SECURITIES PRIVATE LIMITED, SOUTHERN STEEL AND FORGINGS

Born in Chappera, Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Gandhi passed away peacefully in Bangalore on 20th April 2026.

A visionary entrepreneur and a respected industry leader, Mr. Gandhi laid the foundation of the Gandhi Group with unwavering commitment, integrity, and foresight. Through his leadership, he built enduring institutions that contributed meaningfully to the growth of the manufacturing and auto components sector. His legacy is defined not only by business excellence but also by his humility, values, and dedication to people.

He will be remembered as a guiding force, an inspiring mentor, and a compassionate human being whose impact will continue to be felt for generations.

He is deeply mourned by his family, colleagues, associates, and all members of the Gandhi Group.

Uthavana:
Surana Bhavan,
Railway Parallel Road,Kumara Park West,Bengaluru – 560020
Date: 22nd April 2026,**Time**: 10:00 AM
We pray for the eternal peace of his soul.
Om Shanti.
Gandhi Family & Jhawari Family (In laws)
Family Contacts:
Mayank Gandhi 7022640738, Siddharth Gandhi 7760969217,
Harsh Gandhi 7760969186 & Mehul Gandhi 8123517085

MSME TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, BENGALURU
A Government of India Society
Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
Plot No.6, Aerospace Park, KIADB Industrial Estate, Bengaluru North, Karnataka – 562129

INVITATION OF PROPOSAL FOR EMPANELMENT OF TRAINING SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR PROFESSIONALS / FUTURE SKILL / ENTREPRENEURSHIP ORIENTED SKILL PROGRAMMES

MSME Technology Centre Bengaluru Invites proposals for Empanelment of Training Service Provider to conduct latest technology Industrial Skills / Future Skills / Entrepreneur / Professional Courses for catering the need & Skilling up youth & Upskilling / Reskilling the industry Professional.

The interested entities may be submit their proposal by clicking on the Link given below : https://forms.gle/74E4ryDPjUnEexD96 or Scan the QR Code for submission of proposal :

Last Date of Application 06 May 2026 till 05:00pm
Email: training@msmetcblr.org Website: msmetcblr.org

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS:TIRUPATI
S.V.GOSAMRAKSHANA SHALA, TIRUPATI
e -TENDER NOTICE

NIT No. TTD-30/28/2026-SV GOSHALA dt:18.04.2026
e-Tenders were invited for procurement of Pasteurized Toned Milk through "e-tender" for a period one year tender documents can be downloaded by login to https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in and select on current tenders and click on more and then select " Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams at department field and "S.V.Gosamrakshana Shala Dairy Farm in the circle / Division field and click on search button. **Download Start date 23.04.2026 from 11.00 AM** and **Last date for submission of tender is 06.05.2026 up to 05.01 PM.** For further details contact Mobile No.:9281413626.

TTD-40021(31)/1/2026 - PRO SEC (Adv. No 21). Date - 21.04.2026 **Executive Officer**

PROFESSOR JA YASHANKAR TELANGANA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY
Administrative Office: Rajendranagar: Hyderabad-30, Telangana

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION UNDER NRI/NRI SPONSORED QUOTA FOR AY 2026-27
Advt.No. 233/Admissions/2026 **Date: 20.04.2026**

ONLINE applications are invited from the eligible BI.P.C. / M.P.C. candidates for admission into Undergraduate (UG) courses of B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture, B.Tech. (Agricultural Engineering), B.Tech. (Food Technology) and B.Sc. (Hons.) Community Science under NRI / NRI Sponsored Quota for the academic year 2026-27. Last date for submission of Online application is **06.05.2026.** For more details, please visit the University website **www.pjtau.edu.in.**

Sd/- G.E. CH. VIDYA SAGAR
REGISTRAR

DIPR R.O.No.52-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/2026-27, Dt: 21-04-2026

भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
रेल मंत्रालय MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(रेलवे बोर्ड) (RAILWAY BOARD)

Ministry of Railways, Government of India invites applications from eligible persons for the post of **Director (Works)** in National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL), which is implementing Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed train project:

For detailed advertisement, kindly refer to **www.indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard > For IR Personnel>Vacancy Circular>Vacancy Circular_2026**

The applications, along with enclosures may be sent to:
Shri Ravi Shekhar, Joint Secretary/Deputation, Ministry of Railways, Room No.152-J, Rail Bhawan, New Delhi-110001.

Last date for receipt of applications is **17.30 hrs.** on **20.05.2026.** Applications received after the last date will not be entertained and no correspondence will be entertained in this regard.

ARMY WELFARE HOUSING ORGANISATION
AWHO
Kashmir House, Rajaji Marg, New Delhi-110 011
(Registered under Society act XXI of 1860)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR (CONTRACT) AND DEPUTY PROJECT DIRECTOR BANGALORE, MYSORE AND BELGAUM

AWHO intends to hire **Deputy Director (Contract)** and **Deputy Project Director Bangalore, Mysore and Belgaum.** Interested candidates may visit AWHO Website **www.awhosena.in** for vacancy and other details.

AWHO Management

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in Mobile No. 96461-10914

E-Tender Enq. No. 726/P-1/EMPW-13296 dtd. 17.04.2026

Dy.Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-Tender ID No. 2026_POWER_166492_1 for Running and Maintenance of 3 No. Sewerage Treatment Plants at Power Colony and Nuhon Colony, GGSSTP, and Rupnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 20.04.2026 from 05.00 PM onwards.

Note: Corrigendum & addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

RTP- 40/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2026-27/10688

PUBLIC NOTICE

We are undertaking a title investigation on the immovable properties more fully described in the **'Schedule'** hereto and hereinafter referred to as **'Schedule Properties'.** The said title due diligence is being conducted for and on behalf of our Client who is desirous of entering into a certain transaction in relation to the Schedule Properties. The present Owners of the Schedule Properties mentioned in the Schedule hereinbelow have represented to our Client that they own the Schedule Properties and that they have unrestricted rights of alienation over the same.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that any person/s other than the present Owners, asserting any right, title, charge, lien, claim/s or any interest whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Properties are hereby called upon to submit to the undersigned, their claim/s, if any, over the Schedule Properties or submit their objections, if any, to the aforementioned transaction. The said claim/s or objections must be in writing, together with documentary proof to support such claim/s or objections, and must be delivered to us at the address given below within a period of **15 (Fifteen) days** from the date of publication of this Notice. If no such claim/s or objections are received, it shall be deemed that no one else other than the present Owners has/have any right, title, interest or claim whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Properties and our Client would be at liberty to proceed with the said transaction in connection with the Schedule Properties.

SCHEDULE

(Description of the Schedule Properties)

All that piece and parcel of immovable properties comprised in Survey Nos. 31/1, 31/4 and 62/1, all situated at Chikkatirupati Village, Lakkuru Hobli, Malur Taluk, Kolar District, more fully described in the table below:

Sl. No.	Sy. No	Extent	Owner Name	East By	West By	North By	South By
1	31/1	20 Guntas	Mr. Krishnappa, son of Late Yallappa.	Sy. No. 31/4;	Sy. No. 31/2;	Sy. No. 183; and	Sy. No. 30;
2	31/4	09.08 Guntas	Mr. Venkateshappa, son of Late Yallappa.	Sy. No. 31/5 (Old Sy. No. 31/4);	Sy. No. 31/1;	Sy. No. 183; and	Sy. No. 30.
3	62/1	19.67 Guntas (out of 01 Acre 19 Guntas excluding 1 Gunta of 'A' kharab and ½ Gunta of 'B' kharab)	(i) Mrs. Eeramma (wife of Late Venkateshappa); (ii) Mrs. Veena S (wife of Late Manjunatha JV); (iii) Mr. Chethan M (son of Late Manjunath JV); (iv) Ms. Kavyashree JM (daughter of Late Manjunath JV); and (v) Mr. V Krishnamurthy (son of Late Venkateshappa).	Road and Lake;	Lands bearing Sy. No. 59/5;	Remaining portion of land bearing Sy. No. 62/1; and	Lands bearing Sy. Nos. 62/2, 62/3, 62/4.

Date: 22.04.2026
Place: Bangalore

Sd/- Mr. Srinivas B.R.
Partner, DSK Legal, Prestige Loka, No. 201, 2nd Floor, No. 7/1 & 7/7, Brunton Road, Bengaluru – 560025. Tel: 080-69548770

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ
ಅಪರ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು (ಕಂದಾಯ) ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ವಾಣಿಜ್ಯ ಸಂಕೀರ್ಣ ಕಟ್ಟಡ, 2ನೇ ಮಹಡಿ, 9ನೇ ಮುಖ್ಯರಸ್ತೆ, 9ನೇ ಅಡ್ಡರಸ್ತೆ, 2ನೇ ಬ್ಲಾಕ್, ಜಯನಗರ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು–560011

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಅ.ಆ(ದ)/ಜನಗಣತಿ/ಪಿಆರ್/12/2026–27 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.04.2026

ಭಾರತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ-2027 ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆಗೆ ಗಣತಿದಾರರ ನೇಮಕಾತಿಗೆ ನೇರ ಸಂದರ್ಶನ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾರತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ–2027ರ ಮೊದಲನೇ ಹಂತದ ಕಾರ್ಯವಾದ ಮನೆ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಮತ್ತು ಮನೆ ಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯ ಹಾಗೂ ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 2027ರಲ್ಲಿನ 2ನೇ ಹಂತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯದ ಪರಿಣಾಮಕಾರಿಯಾಗಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಕಾಲಮಿತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಳಿಸುವ ಉದ್ದೇಶ ಹೊಂದಿದ್ದು, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಮಹತ್ವದ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಿಸುವ ಮೂಲಕ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರದ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ ಕೈಜೋಡಿಸಲು, ಈ ಸಂಬಂಧ ಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸಲು ಆಸಕ್ತ, ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು, ಪುರುಷ ಹಾಗೂ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ನೇರ ಸಂದರ್ಶನಕ್ಕೆ ಹಾಜರಾಗಲು ತಿಳಿಸಿದೆ.

ಗಣತಿದಾರರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ, ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಹತೆ, ಗೌರವ ಧನ ಹಾಗೂ ಇನ್ನಿತರೆ ವಿವರ :

1. ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಹತೆ: ದ್ವಿತೀಯ ಪಿ.ಯು.ಸಿ. ಹಾಗೂ ಅದಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಹತೆ ಹೊಂದಿರಬೇಕು.
2. ಕನಿಷ್ಠ **Android-12, 4 GB RAM Specification** ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಹೊಂದಿರಬೇಕು.
3. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ **ಬೊಮ್ಮನಹಳ್ಳಿ ವಲಯ** (1) ಬೊಮ್ಮನಹಳ್ಳಿ (2) ಹೆಚ್.ಎಸ್.ಆರ್ (3) ಅರಕೆರೆ (4) ಪುಟ್ಟೇನಹಳ್ಳಿ (5) ಸಿಂಗಸಂದ್ರ (6) ಕೂಡ್ಲು (7) ಕೋರಮಂಗಲ (8) ಬಿ.ಟಿ.ಎಮ್ ಹಾಗೂ (9) ಕಸವನಹಳ್ಳಿ ಮತ್ತು **ಜಯನಗರ ವಲಯ** (1) ಬೇಗೂರು (2) ಅಂಜನಾಪುರ (3) ಗೊಟ್ಟಿಗೆರೆ (4) ತಲಘಟ್ಟಪುರ (5) ಉತ್ತರಹಳ್ಳಿ (6) ಯಲಚೇನಹಳ್ಳಿ (7) ಜೆ.ಪಿ.ನಗರ (8) ಜಯನಗರ ಹಾಗೂ (9) ಬನಶಂಕರಿ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರಗಳ ನಿವಾಸಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಮೊದಲ ಆದ್ಯತೆ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು.
4. ಮೊದಲ ಹಂತದ ಮನೆ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಮತ್ತು ಮನೆಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯವು **ದಿನಾಂಕ: 15.05.2026** ವರೆಗೆ ನಡೆಯಲಿದ್ದು, ಅಲ್ಲಿಯವರೆಗೆ ರಜಾ ದಿನವೂ ಸೇರಿದಂತೆ ನಿರಂತರವಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಿಸಲು ಬದ್ಧರಾಗಿರಬೇಕು.
5. ಭಾರತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ–2027ರ ಜನಗಣತಿ ಮಾರ್ಗಸೂಚಿಯನ್ವಯ **ದಿನಾಂಕ: 15.05.2026** ವರೆಗಿನ ಮೊದಲ ಹಂತದ ಒಂದು ಬ್ಲಾಕ್‌ಗೆ ಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ **ರೂ.9,000/– (ರೂ. ಒಂಭತ್ತು ಸಾವಿರ ಮಾತ್ರ)** ಗೌರವಧನ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು (ಕನಿಷ್ಠ 150–200 ಮನೆಗಳಿಗೆ) ಎರಡು ಬ್ಲಾಕ್‌ಗಳಿಗೆ ರೂ.18,000/–ಗಳು (ಅಂದಾಜು 400 ಮನೆಗಳು)
6. ಭಾರತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ–2027ರ 2ನೇ ಹಂತದ ಕಾರ್ಯವು ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ–2027 ರ ಮಾಹೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಯಲಿದ್ದು, ಸದರಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ಕೆ **ರೂ. 16,000/– (ರೂ. ಹದಿನಾರು ಸಾವಿರ ಮಾತ್ರ)** ಗೌರವಧನ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು. (150–200 ಮನೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಅಥವಾ 750 ರಿಂದ 800 ಜನಸಂಖ್ಯೆಗೆ)
7. ಈ ಆಯ್ಕೆಯು ಭಾರತದ ಜನಗಣತಿ–2027ರ ಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆಗೆ ಮಾತ್ರ ಸೀಮಿತವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.
8. ಆಯ್ಕೆಯಾದವರಿಗೆ ಕಾರ್ಯ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ ಅನುಕೂಲವಾಗಲು ಜನಗಣತಿ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಅಪ್ಲಿಕೇಷನ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಪಡೆಯುವ ಹಾಗೂ ಗಣತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಣೆ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಮಾಸ್ಟರ್ ಟ್ರೈನರ್ ಗಳಿಂದ ಅಗತ್ಯ ತರಬೇತಿ ನೀಡಲಾಗುವುದು.
9. ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ಗಣತಿದಾರರ ಬೊಮ್ಮನಹಳ್ಳಿ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ 1.163 ಮತ್ತು ಜಯನಗರ ವಲಯಕ್ಕೆ 582 ಒಟ್ಟು ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 1.745 ಗಣತಿದಾರರು
10. ನೇಮಕಾತಿ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ಮಾನ್ಯ ಆಯುಕ್ತರ ವಿವೇಚನೆಗೆ ಒಳಪಟ್ಟಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ನೇರ ಸಂದರ್ಶನ ದಿನಾಂಕ, ಸಮಯ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಥಳ :
ದಿನಾಂಕ:22.04.2026 (ಬುಧವಾರ) ಮತ್ತು 23.04.2026 (ಗುರುವಾರ)
ಸಮಯ: ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆಯಿಂದ ಸಂಜೆ 5.00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ

ಸ್ಥಳ: 1) ಬೊಮ್ಮನಹಳ್ಳಿ ವಲಯ: ಜಂಟಿ ಆಯುಕ್ತರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ, ಬೇಗೂರು. ಬೊಮ್ಮನಹಳ್ಳಿ ರೋಡ್, CMC ಬಿಲ್ಡಿಂಗ್, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು. **(ಜಂಟಿ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು ರವರ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 8762716711 ಮತ್ತು ಉಪ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು ರವರ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 9480684353)**

2) ಜಯನಗರ ವಲಯ ಶಾಶ್ವತಿ ಆಡಿಟೋರಿಯಮ್, NMKRV COLLEGE, JAYANAGAR, 3" BLOCK, BENGALURU. **(ಜಂಟಿ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು ರವರ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 9481492649 ಮತ್ತು ಉಪ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು ರವರ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬೇಕಾದ ಮೊಬೈಲ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 9916536036)**

ಮಾನ್ಯ ಆಯುಕ್ತರ ಆದೇಶದ ಮೇರೆಗೆ

ಸಹಿ/– ಅಪರ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು (ಕಂದಾಯ)
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1001/21/2627
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e-tender No1082 Dt. 21/04/2026 The Joint Director of Agriculture (Information), Bhubaneswar invites e-tender from the eligible Central Govt./State Govt. PSUs for **"Procurement of 314 Nos. of Interactive Panels"**.

The detail tender document can be downloaded from the website of Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Odisha at **www.agri.odisha.gov.in** or **https://tendersodisha.gov.in** from 21.04.2026.

The bids can be submitted through online mode in the **https://tendersodisha.gov.in** before 12.05.2026, 5.30 PM.

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Goyal: Cong, DMK humiliated Indians

▶ Continued from page 1

The comments triggered a heated debate on social media and drew sharp criticism from the BJP leadership. Union minister and BJP TN incharge Piyush Goyal rebutted Kharge, stating, "Congress and DMK have humiliated 140 crore Indians, including our eight crore Tamil brothers and sisters, with this statement."

Goyal demanded that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin also apologise for Kharge's remarks. Upon arriving in Karnataka, Kharge clarified that he did not mean that Modi was a terrorist but was only accusing the PM of "terrorising" politicians and candidates using central agencies to win elections. "I said that tax terrorism is happening. I did not call him a terrorist; rather, he is facilitating a form of terrorism to scare people. He is trying to silence people through raids and attempting to defeat them in elections," Kharge said.

Former BJP Tamil Nadu unit chief K Annamalai and several other BJP politicians expressed strong protests over the remarks and joined the chorus demanding an apology.

However, Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal dismissed BJP's allegations, stating that Kharge had already clarified he did not call the PM a terrorist. Venugopal added that BJP is "manipulating a non-issue into an issue", calling the backlash "unwarranted".

Mamata fighting like tigress, bound to win, says Uddhav

Chaitanya.Marpakwar
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Citing the heavy deployment of security personnel in West Bengal ahead of the state assembly polls, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday slammed the BJP-led Centre and voiced support for chief minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee saying, "A lone woman is fighting like a tigress; she is bound to win."

Thackeray said, "To defeat this single woman, over 2,00,000 CRPF personnel have been deployed. When Manipur was in flames, there were 30,000 troops on the ground. How is one supposed to vote? There are troops stationed at every street corner. Under such circumstances, who would dare to cast a vote?" Uddhav said. Thackeray was speaking at the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena's 58th annual general meeting in Dadar.

"If Mamata Banerjee loses, they (BJP) will take the credit for winning. Is this democracy? Yogi Adityanath is there, the Prime Minister is there, so is our CM (Devendra Fadnavis). But in this state (Maharashtra), a drug racket is going on. Hypocrisy is on display. Women are being exploited, but we have washed our hands of the issue. Maharashtra was won, then Bengal became the goal, next Assam and so on. Workers who took out a march in Uttar Pradesh were accused of being Pakistanis. It has been a year since the Pahalgam attack, but govt did not know where these terrorists had come from, yet they accused the workers of being Pakistanis," he said.

Taking a dig at Sena, he said, "Today, everything is in a state of flux. The general attitude is 'I want everything'. If anyone expects to get anything by going there, then definitely go. But first learn about the experiences of those who have gone there," he said.

Supriya attends Sunetra's poll rally

Pune: NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule joined her sister-in-law and NCP chief Sunetra Pawar's rally for the bypoll in Baramati on Tuesday, the last day of campaigning, but left the venue before CM Devendra Fadnavis's arrival, citing prior commitments. Voting is on Thursday. She remembered her cousin Ajit and said "Sunetra vahini should win the bypoll by a record margin". After her speech, both sisters-in-law hugged and interacted briefly, before Supriya left for Pune. Sunetra, on her part, thanked Supriya Sharad Pawar for supporting her by not fielding a candidate against her. Speaking about the plane crash that killed Ajit Pawar, she said "I too, have some queries about the crash. We strongly demand that the truth come out and we will not compromise," she said. — **Anurag Bende.**

Centre offers states 10% extra commercial LPG

▶ Continued from page 1

Similarly, Maharashtra accounted for over 22% (1.2 lakh) of the 5.2 lakh new registrations, followed by UP 88,000 and Gujarat 76,000.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board data shows there were over 1.6 crore domestic PNG connections as of Jan 31 this year, of which a little over one crore were active. The number of commercial and industrial customers stood at 48,568 and 21,512, respectively, across 307 geographical areas. The PNGRB has directed gas companies to expedite domestic piped gas connections in 110 geographical areas, including 25 in UP and 12 in Maharashtra, and extended a national expansion drive, launched on Jan 1 this year, till June 30 to sustain momentum.

Gas companies are also coordinating with district authorities where the number of connections is less than 10,000 to find ways to improve infrastructure and expedite approvals required for network expansion. The Centre has offered all states and Union Territories an additional 10% allocation of commercial LPG, provided they support a long-term transition from LPG to PNG. Sujata Sharma, the joint secretary in petroleum ministry, said 22 states and UTs are receiving additional commercial LPG allocation linked to PNG expansion reforms.

The Centre has streamlined and prepared a time-bound framework for laying and expanding pipelines, addressing delays in approvals and access to land, and enabling faster development of natural gas infrastructure, including in residential areas.

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tender & notices

NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the general public that I, SHIVAKUMAR G.N, aged about 39 years, S/o Sri Nanjundaiah, residing at No. 4 & 5, RNS House, 1st Main, 2nd Cross, Srigandhakaval, Bangalore – 560091, intend to purchase the Schedule Property from SRI ARASU V, aged about 71 years, S/o A.M. Venugopalan, residing at No. 02, Dr. Rajkumar Road, Prakash Nagar, Bangalore – 560061, who claims to be the absolute owner of the said property. Any person/s having any right, title, interest, claim or demand whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Property, whether by way of sale, mortgage, lease, lien, inheritance, agreement, MOU or otherwise, are hereby required to intimate the same in writing, along with supporting documents, to the undersigned at the above address within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no such claim is received within the stipulated period, it shall be presumed that no such claims exist and the proposed sale transaction shall be completed without reference to any such claims. Any claims received thereafter shall be deemed to have been waived. Schedule All the piece and parcel of the Property Bearing No.01, New BBMP (GBA)PID No.1995947777, Katha No.617, Assessment No.21/1 and 21/2Situated At Srigandadhakavalu Village, (Narasapura), Now Comes under the BBMP (GBA) Ward No.129 Gnanabharathi Ward, Yashwanthpura Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Measuring East toWest : 60-0 Feet And North To South: 40-0 Feet Totally 2400 Sqft.

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I, Mohammed Dilawar Khan, S/o Mardan Khan, R/o Fno.44,Opp Peninsula Mill, Nimbekaipura Road, Virgo Nagar Post, Hoskote, Bangalore-560049. Have changed my name as Dilawar Khan.

I, Shabeen Ibn Ehtesham, S/o, Syed Ehteshamul Haque, R/o Flat 1A. 26, 13th cross road, teacher's colony, HSR Layout sector 5. Bangalore 560034 have changed my name to Shabee Ibn Ehtesham for all purposes.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I Shakti Bhatnagar Roberts , W/o James Roberts , R/o Flat No. F-402, Hoysala Habitat, Harohalli Nagenahalli Main Road Singanayakanahalli, B'lore-64 Have changed my name to Shakti Roberts vide Affidavit dated 1/4/2026 Henceforth, I shall be known Shakti Roberts for all Purposes Notary S.R. Ravikumar Bangalore

I James Benedict Roberts , S/o Emil Melville Roberts , R/o Flat No. F-402, Hoysala Habitat, Harohalli Nagenahalli Main Road, Singanayakanahalli, B'lore- 64 Have changed my name to James Roberts vide Affidavit dated 1/4/2026 Henceforth, I shall be known James Roberts for all Purposes Notary S.R. Ravikumar Bangalore

IT is hereby notified that Advik Gupta, son of Deepak Gupta, residing at Flat No. 301, 77 East Phase 2, Urbanest by Modern Spaces, Near Sompura Gate, Sarjapura Road, Bengaluru – 562125, has changed his name to Adhvik Gupta and shall hereafter be known by the new name for all purposes.

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LOST & FOUND

I, Jerripothula Geetha Rani have Lost My Original Sale deed documents Situated in "Rangopanditha Agraharam Village of Hosur Taluk, Krishnagiri Dist., Doc No - 4243/1999, Sy No - 6/3 and 6/4, Agri Land (Area Extend AC 1.00 Cents), (SRO Hosur). While Some Personal Work in B'lore Near Byappanahalli, Case Registered No - 2162602/2026, Sakala No - P0012S260001105, Aff No - IN-KA38671721730106Y. Finder Please Contact or Return to This Address : Jerripothula Geetha Rani, C/O Suthekar, No.38, 3rd Floor, 2nd Cross, Near Rama Seetha Bajana Mandira, Nanjappa Block, K.G Nagar, Gonapuram Extension, Phone - 9490689037.

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Time To Be Flat, Fast & Smart

Ronesh Puri

In today's BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, incomprehensible) world, organisations are evolving faster than ever. The shelf life of even the largest companies is shrinking. Over 50% of Fortune 500 firms from 30 years ago no longer exist, and nearly a third have disappeared in just the last decade. Survival is no longer guaranteed, even for the biggest players.

Organisational structures in future will look very different from today. As accountability increases, traditional hierarchies, designed for efficiency, will give way to models built for speed and improved decision-making quality. Here's what the road ahead looks like for this phenomenon.

Flatter, leaner structures

Companies will become significantly flatter, reducing layers and bureaucracy. Functions will merge, and decision-making will move closer to the frontlines.

Roles such as chief customer experience officer and chief innovation officer will gain prominence and report directly to the CEO. The chief innovation officer, often symbolic today, will become a powerful role with real accountability as innovation becomes critical for survival. Workforces could shrink significantly—by as much as 50% in some sectors—due to AI-driven productivity.

Job security will decline, while employee performance will be closely tracked in an increasingly outcome-driven environment.

Customer obsession

Future organisations are likely to be intensely customer focused. Customers will be more informed, more demanding and less loyal, with instant access to information. False claims and poor service will be quickly exposed. A single negative experience can have the potential to spread widely and damage a company's reputation. As loyalty becomes fragile, organisations will prioritise customer retention, experience and delight. Customer experience function will gain greater authority and play a central role in decision-making.

Shared leadership

The traditional model of a single, dominant CEO will evolve. Increasing complexity will push organisations toward shared leadership. As the CEO's job becomes even more demanding, organisations will push for shared leadership to mitigate business risks. Co-CEO structures and stronger executive teams will become more common, improving decision speed and reducing dependence on one individual.

Remote, borderless work

The pandemic proved that remote work is viable. Going forward, remote and hybrid models will become more popular and acceptable as their advantages outweigh their disadvantages.

CXOs working across different geographies will become more common. Organisations will embrace this shift to reduce real estate costs and attract talent.

Stronger, strategic boards

Boards will evolve from compliance and corporate governance-focused bodies into strategic enablers. They will play a more active role in guiding growth, managing risk and shaping the long-term direction of a company. Advisory boards could also become more common, providing specialised expertise and external perspectives in an uncertain environment In this new reality, adaptability will matter more than size or legacy. Organisations—and individuals—must continuously reinvent themselves to stay relevant.

(Ronesh Puri is MD of Executive Access)

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Administration Office	Electrical Engineer	1
	Hostel Warden – Male & Female (Both campuses)	2
	Front Office Executive	1
Placements Office	Regional Manager – Placements (Mumbai/Bengaluru)	2
	Manager (Placements)	2
	Senior Executive (Placements)	2
Admissions Office	Counsellor / Telecallers	2
Computer Center	Technical Assistant	2
	Senior Software Engineer	1
Academic Services Office	Jr. Executive (Establishment & Approvals)	2
	Jr. Executive (Director's Office)	1
	Executive (Approvals & Rankings)	1
IQAC Office	Senior Manager (Accreditation)	1
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'They took my husband, but can't take away my courage'

Maha Family Turns Grief Into Resolve

Pradeep Gupta

'WON'T LET FEAR DEFINE OUR LIFE': We want people to continue visiting Kashmir. It is our country. We should not let terrorism win, says Kavita

Kalyan: A year has passed since the Pahalgam attack, but for Kavita Lele (46), time has not really moved on. The memories remain sharp, the loss deeply personal. Sitting in her home in Dombivli East, the 47-year-old speaks with a calmness that comes not from healing, but from choosing strength every single day.

Of the 28 tourists killed in the attack, three were from her own extended family — her husband Sanjay Lele (50), along with Atul Mone (43) and Hemant Joshi (45). More than relatives, they were friends who lived within a short distance of each other, spending a lot of time together until that one trip changed everything.

"Terrorists may have taken my husband from me, but they haven't been able to break me. I don't want anyone to live in fear because that is exactly what they (terrorists) want," Kavita says, her voice steady.

For her, the Kashmir trip was never meant to be just a holiday. After 18 years of struggling with paralysis-related health issues, she had barely stepped out for travel. It took a lot of persuasion from her husband to finally agree. Their son Harshal had completed his graduation, Atul's daughter Rucha her Class XIII exams, and Hemant's son his 10th — responsibilities had eased, and it felt like the right time.

"I was not ready initially. I kept thinking, what if I cannot manage? But everyone told me they would take care of me," she recalls.

Nine members from the three families travelled together — by train to Ahmedabad, then by flight to Kashmir. A couple of days later, they headed to Pahalgam.

Their first day in Pahalgam was filled with excitement. The plan was to visit Baisaran Valley. Kavita hesitated again, worried about the climb. "I told my husband I won't be able to go that far. But he said if I don't go, he won't go either," she told **TOI**, remembering how she eventually agreed.

"We were enjoying... just like any family would. And then suddenly, everything changed," she says, pausing briefly. Armed terrorists appeared and began separating tourists. Kavita, unable to stand properly, leaned on her husband for support. He helped her stay slightly behind him.

"I couldn't see much. But I heard them ask — 'Who among you is Hindu?' My husband raised his hand first, asking what happened," she says. The next sound she remembers is gunfire. "The bullet touched my son's finger and then hit my husband," she says quietly.

Her son Harshal, then 20, survived with an injury. But in those few moments, everything collapsed. Hemant Joshi was shot soon after. When the attackers moved towards Atul Mone, his wife tried to shield him. "She told them to shoot her instead. But they said they don't kill women, and then they shot him," Kavita recounts.

"We stayed there for 15-20 minutes. We tried to wake him up... but he didn't respond," she says, her voice slowing down. "Locals told us to run, to save ourselves. They said the army would come."

Six of them managed to escape. "Later we came to know, all three were gone," she says.

A year later, on April 11, as per the Hindu calendar, the families performed simple rituals at their homes. There were no gatherings, no elaborate ceremonies — just quiet prayers and memories shared among close relatives.

Kavita has kept going for one purpose — her son. "My only goal is to raise my son into a good human being, just like his father," she says.

Harshal, now 22, is pursuing post-graduation. The children of the other two also continue their studies, supported by their families.

"The pain is always there. But we have to stay strong for our children," Kavita says.

She acknowledges support extended by relatives and govt, from compensation to assurances of jobs for the children in the future. But more than anything, it is the people around her who have helped her get back up. "On difficult days, it is our extended family and neighbours that stands firmly beside us," she says.

And despite everything, Kavita refuses to let fear define her life. "We want people to continue visiting Kashmir. It is our country. We should not let terrorism win," she says.

Kavita also expressed satisfaction over steps taken by the Centre and the Army after the Pahalgam attack. She said the govt did whatever it could in response — whether it was operations like Operation Sindoor or the crackdown and arrests of several terrorists and their local aides who were involved in the attack.

"The aim of terrorists was to target tourists and destroy the growing tourism in Kashmir. But I am happy that people did not get scared the way terrorists wanted. Instead, tourists have started returning to Kashmir in large numbers again," she says. There is no anger in her voice, only resolve.

STROKES OF COURAGE 'N' REMEMBRANCE

IANS

A painter creates an artwork to mark one year of the Pahalgam attack, at Gurukul School of Art, Mumbai Tuesday

Duo took ₹3,000 from terrorists, sheltered them, chose silence

▶ Continued from P1

The duo — who had accepted Rs 3,000 from the terrorists in return for harbouring and facilitating them — chose to embrace silence, when they could have easily placed a call to police or alerted local tourist operators' association about spotting terrorists in the area. They kept mum even after the terrorists left their house at around 10.30 pm on April 21, 2025, after spending five hours and eating meals, investigation has revealed. While leaving, the terrorists had packed some food in a polythene bag and borrowed a cooking vessel, blankets and a tarpaulin sheet to set up their own shelter in the vicinity.

Though Bashir and Parvaiz had spotted the terrorists near the Baisaran fence, they simply moved away to a distant spot with their ponies, waiting for their tourist customers to return.

Between 1 pm and 1.30 pm, Bashir and Parvaiz ferried the tourists back to Pahalgam on their ponies. Hours later, when they eventually heard of the blood-curdling murders in Baisaran by the very same terrorists they had sheltered, they quietly and promptly abandoned their dhoks (temporary mountain hut) and went into hiding.

NIA ultimately caught up with the duo and arrested them on June 22, 2025. The two were chargesheeted in Dec along with Sajid Jatt, the three Pakistani attackers (deceased) and LeT/TRF as an entity.

Sources in the agencies on Tuesday told **TOI** that the Pakistan link to Pahalgam conspiracy was further confirmed by Facebook which traced a misleading post circulated in India, claiming 'Jibran was our man', to Pakistani phone numbers in Bahawalpur and Rawalpindi.

IAF's Sirsa unit destroyed Pak missile likely aimed at Delhi

Surendra.Singh
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New Delhi: Had it not been for the quick response of an IAF unit based in Haryana that managed the Barak-8 surface-to-air missile system, a Pakistani ballistic missile, which may have had Delhi as its target, would have inflicted considerable damage at the height of Indo-Pak conflict in May last year.

On the first anniversary of April 22 Pahalgam attack that claimed the lives of 26 civilians and led to India launching Op Sindoor against Pakistan, **TOI** has learnt that it was Air Commodore Rohit Kapil, Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of 45 Wing in Sirsa — a forward IAF base close to Pakistan border — and his team that had successfully intercepted and destroyed the Pakistani ballistic missile (presumably a Fatah missile or Shaheen-II variant) over Sirsa airspace with their Barak-8 missile system. The Pakistani missile may have had Delhi as its target. Security forces retrieved parts of the missile from Sirsa on May 10, with videos of its parts strewn on the ground going viral.

The swift action by 45 Wing of IAF averted a major attack and showed the effectiveness of India's integrated air defence network, which the govt is now working to expand to pan-India level under Sudarshan programme. The proposed multi-layered Sudarshan will fuse existing, indigenous and advanced systems — such as Russian S-400s, Barak-8 MRSAM and indigenous Project Kusha interceptor system — to protect Indian cities, strategic assets and infrastructure from drones, cruise missiles and hypersonic threats.

A Pakistani ballistic missile was downed over Sirsa using the Barak-8 system, averting a potential strike... its debris was later recovered

Not many knew about Air Commodore Kapil and his team's vigilant action during last year's conflict, but it may have saved many lives. For his role in air defence as AOC of 45 Wing in Sirsa, Air Commodore Kapil was on Aug 14 chosen for Yudh Seva Medal by President Droupadi Murmu. Commissioned as a fighter pilot in 1998, he is a Su-30MKI pilot and Cat 'A' qualified flying instructor and has commanded an operational Su-30MKI squadron.

Ponywallah's family handed over house

Srinagar: Hapatnar village, at the foothills of the Pir Panjal about 15 km ahead of Pahalgam, was unusually bustling Tuesday as Shiv Sena workers gathered for a solemn ceremony.

Joining virtually, Maharashtra deputy CM Eknath Shinde handed over a newly built house to the family of ponywallah Syed Adil Hussain Shah, the lone local victim of the Pahalgam attack who died saving tourists.

Shinde had earlier given Rs 5 lakh and funded the house after seeing their dilapidated home. Adil's family spoke of grief and pride, saying his sacrifice rose above religious divides as support from many quarters helped them stay afloat.

— **Naseer Ganai**

Could Pahalgam Happen Again?

Lt Gen MK Katiyar (Retd)

On 22 April 2025, India was shaken by the dastardly murder of 26 innocent civilians. Various response options were deliberated and simultaneously higher levels of operational readiness were affected to prevent uncontrolled escalation. Operation Sindoor, launched a fortnight later, was a demonstration of decisive leadership backed by a capable military.

If the Pakistan army was guided by reason and national interest, it would desist from sponsoring such terrorist acts in future — for the sake of its people. But history warns otherwise; vested interests of the Pakistan army, and its need to remain politically central, have repeatedly driven it to choose confrontation over conciliation.

Pakistan's founding myth has long rested on an anti-India narrative, and that narrative has been cultivated across generations and institutions. Crucially, the army seized power early and has never fully relinquished it. Even when civilian faces occupy the corridors of power, the military ensures they remain pliant. Strong political figures who challenged that dominance have been removed — the Bhuttos paid with their blood, and Imran Khan has been jailed.

Will the Pakistan army undertake another misadventure akin to Pahalgam? On the face of it, the Pakistan army looks unassailable — confident at home and courted abroad. Its field marshal enjoys the confidence of the world's most powerful political executive. It has basked in global attention by hosting peace talks between the US and Iran.

UNQUIET VALLEY: Security personnel keep vigil in Pahalgam

Shorn of ideology, the Pakistan army can pivot for profit, dictating terms to a pliant civilian govt and taking decisions without any accountability. The aftermath of Operation Sindoor too has been smoothed over with deft narrative management, leaving the Pakistan army comfortably ensconced. What could possibly go wrong for it? Plenty.

First, Pakistan's economic condition is dire. Any fresh crisis, such as current turmoil in the Gulf, will only worsen the precarious situation, fuelling unrest among the populace.

Second, the Afghan border remains volatile. The conflict with Baloch National Army is intensifying, and indiscriminate airstrikes on civilians have deepened resentment. Tehrike-Taliban Pakistan continues to strike with impunity, while attacks on Kabul by the Pakistan air force have further strained relations with the Afghan govt, leaving little room for manoeuvre.

Third, the Imran Khan factor. Though seemingly dormant, his party, PTI, retains mass popularity. Denied victory through the Army's machinations, his supporters may again take to the streets, challenging the Army's supposed infallibility.

Finally, the snakes reared in its own backyard — the terrorist tanzeems nurtured to bleed India — may turn inward when deprived of patronage, biting the very hand that feeds them.

Beneath the veneer of strength of the Pakistan army lies its fragility. Any of the scenarios outlined would call into question its claim to be the sole arbiter of Pakistan's national interest and would undermine its standing.

That perceived erosion of authority could prompt the army to sponsor a grave terror strike in India — an act designed to invite a punitive Indian response and there by thrust the Pakistan army back into the national spotlight, restoring its relevance.

If such an attack occurs, Pakistan would face far harsher consequences than before; its people would suffer grievously. But for the self-serving generals, national pain may be an acceptable price if it secures the Pakistan army's return to primacy. Will Pahalgam happen again? The answer perhaps lies with the Pakistan army.

(The writer was Western Army Commander during the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor)

BJP urges poll panel to take 'penal action' against Kharge

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: BJP on Tuesday urged Election Commission to initiate "suitable penal action" against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for calling PM Narendra Modi a "terrorist", arguing that his choice of word was among the "gravest possible imputations in public life".

"This is not just derogatory, it is a dangerous and unprecedented attack on democratic institutions. A blatant violation of the Model Code of Conduct. Immediate action is non-negotiable," BJP said in its complaint. Union minister Kiren Rijiju and other functionaries asked EC to consider registering an FIR against Kharge for making a "false and defamatory statement" besides violating the poll code.

BJP president Nitin Nabin said Kharge had insulted the mandate of 140 crore Indians who had elected Modi to office three times in a row. Union minister Piyush Goyal, who is his party's in-charge for TN polls, scheduled for April 23, said Rahul Gandhi and CM M K Stalin must apologise for this insult to Modi.

As the row intensified, Kharge tried to clarify his remarks made in Chennai by saying what he meant was that Modi was "terrorising" people and political parties.

Nabin linked Kharge's barb to Congress's attempt to divert from the raging political row over opposition parties joining hands to defeat govt's bid to amend the women's reservation bill. "Whenever Congress finds itself cornered by questions on development and facts, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and their disciples resort to such comments to divert from issues," he said.

"Congress and DMK have humiliated 140 crore Indians, including our eight crore Tamil brothers and sisters, with this statement. This unholy alliance is effectively calling Indians terrorists by targeting the PM," said Goyal.

Union minister Dharmender Pradhan said the enthusiastic response Modi has been drawing in his rallies to emphasise people's affection for him.

Hi-tech cheating fraud in Bihar recruitment exam busted

Patna: Allegations of major fraud rocked BPSC's assistant education development officer recruitment examination, involving a Jaipur-based biometric attendance company that National Testing Agency had blacklisted on Oct 15, 2025, over serious irregularities in a Gujarat HC recruitment exam, reports **Faryal Rumi**.

Despite the blacklisting, Sai Educare Private Limited got the biometric contract for the BPSC exam, held from April 14 to April 21 at around 700 centres to fill 935 posts in the education department. The scandal came to light after complaints poured in during and after the three-paper exam. Thirty people were arrested.

Bihar Police's Economic Offences Unit (EOU) constituted a nine-member SIT on April 18 to probe the scam, which was spread over at least five districts: Munger, Nalanda, Gaya, Sheikhpura and Begusarai.

The company had allegedly hired people linked to the "examination mafia" as contractual employees. "These operatives used biometric tablets to photograph question papers, transmit them outside exam centres for quick solving, and then supply answer keys to candidates who had paid — all under the guise of routine biometric verification," EOU DIG Manavjit Singh Dhillon said on Tuesday.

Errors in biometric data were found at several centres. In some cases, even though candidates were recorded as present, their identity records did not match, said an official.

Dhillon called the arrests "just the beginning", adding the gang also involved candidates and external facilitators.

Counsel for probe panel says there's enough evidence to nail Justice Varma

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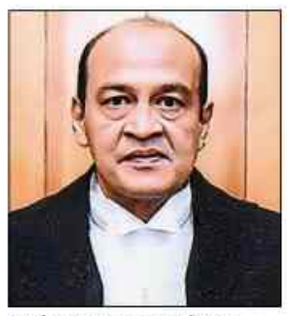


Justice Varma was trying to construct a narrative of procedural unfairness where none existed, the advocates said

New Delhi: Advocates assisting the Justice Aravind Kumar Committee, inquiring into the discovery of cash at Justice Yashwant Varma's residence in March last year, on Tuesday said the evidence produced during the proceedings was enough to substantiate the charge, which was one of the grounds cited in the removal motion against him.

In a communication to the committee, senior advocates Rajkumar Bhaskar Thakare and Aishwarya Bhati, who were appointed under Judges Inquiry Committee Act to assist the panel, termed Justice Varma's letter on April 9 withdrawing from the proceedings as an "attempt to construct a narrative of procedural unfairness where none exists, made at the stage when the judge (Varma) was called upon to answer the charges on merits, knowing full well that tendering the resignation would bring an end to these proceedings."

The two senior advocates said the evidence substantiated the three charges: discovery and possession of unexplained Indian currency within official premises; failing to preserve and causing interference with the material evidence; and furnishing evasive and misleading explanations/statements.

They told the committee that it should not let Justice Varma's unfounded allegations go unanswered as he had never complained of any procedural irregularity till he decided to withdraw from the proceedings, especially when he was required to rebut the evidence. The committee ought not to countenance such a move as a genuine complaint, they added.

Justice Varma had said he was being asked to answer the unanswerable question: where did the money come from? Thakare and Bhati said Justice Varma was best placed to answer how wads of unaccounted for cash ca-me to be placed in a room on his official bungalow premises in the heart of Lutyens zone area of New Delhi.

Terming Justice Varma's allegation that "witnesses were deliberately dropped in a pattern designed to suppress evidence favourable to him" as misconceived and contemptuous, the advocates said the decision not to examine certain witnesses was taken as the documentary and oral evidence already on record was sufficient to prove the charges.

If Justice Varma genuinely felt there was no evidence to prove the charges, then he should have persisted with the inquiry proceedings to get a clean chit, they said.

Thakare and Bhati said Justice Varma did not dispute the following: presence of cash in the storeroom of his official residence, removal of burnt/half-burnt wads of cash from the storeroom after first responders left the premises on the night of March 14-15 last year, presence of his family members and personal staff during the firefighting operation, and control of the premises with him or his family members.

Jobless, UP man poisons pet dog, dies by suicide

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bareilly: A 30-year-old man and his pet dog were found dead inside a locked house in Izzatnagar area, police said Tuesday. Prima facie, Nikhil Arora is suspected to have poisoned his pet and then died by suicide by consuming a toxic substance, SP Manush Pareek said.

Relatives said Arora lived alone and had lost his job during the Covid-19 pandemic. He was under extreme financial stress and had borrowed money. The matter came to light when his cousin alerted police after failing to contact him.

Police broke open the door and found Arora dead with his pet labrador beside him. Investigation is underway.

Explosions hampered rescue ops for 3 hours

▶ Continued from P1

While the exact cause is yet to be confirmed, experts cited prevailing heatwave conditions as a possible factor.

A worker, Wilson, said the fire may have originated from wicks kept for drying in the open sun, which could have ignited due to extreme heat. The district administration has ordered a magisterial inquiry. The unit is located in an isolated paddy field. The blaze broke out around 3pm, destroying four sheds storing fireworks.

The impact of the explosion was so intense that residents in nearby areas initially mistook it for an earthquake. Windowpanes in houses nearly 500 metres away cracked. The blasts were heard across distant locations. Large plumes of smoke were visible from afar. Rescue operations were hampered as explosions continued for nearly three hours after the fire began.

Contractor Mundathikode Satheesan, the licensee of the unit and a known name in the fireworks industry, suffered serious injuries.

A late-evening official release said that nine bodies were recovered from the site. Additional dismembered body parts were also found. Collector Sikha Surendran said that DNA tests would be needed to determine whether the remains belonged to separate individuals.

CM, NIA team visit Raj refinery after fire

Jaipur/New Delhi: A day after a fire ripped through Rajasthan's Pachpadra refinery, which PM Modi was scheduled to inaugurate on Tuesday, officials from security agencies, including National Investigation Agency, forensic teams and the state administration led by chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, reached the site to assess the damage.

Sharma, accompanied by ministers and officials, and a team from Rajasthan ATS, inspected the site in Balotra and held discussions with the refinery management, report **Srikanta Tripathy & Atul Mathur**.

A 4-member team has been set up to investigate the blaze, and why the fire extinguishing system failed to operate

A 4-member team has been set up to investigate the blaze, which will, among other things, examine why the fire extinguishing system failed to operate.

The probe team will also determine the cause of the incident. Officials aware of the development said the fire extinguishing system, the first line of protection, failed to deploy immediately.

Sujata Sharma, the joint secretary in the petroleum ministry, said the team, led by former MRPL managing director M Venkatesh, had reached Barmer to investigate the incident. "We will only be able to tell you the reasons and how much time the repair will take after the report is submitted," she said.

HPCL, which holds 74% stake in the refinery, with Rajasthan govt having 26%, said, "Prima facie it appears that leakage of hydrocarbons through one of the valves or flanges in the heat exchanger circuit caused the fire." The financial and operational impact, if any, was being assessed, but prima facie, it was not expected to be material, it added.

The fire was contained within the heat exchanger stacks in the crude distillation unit section of the refinery, the company said, adding that all other units were quickly isolated.

LATEST IN HEALTH RESEARCH

Toothpaste that spares good bacteria, stops gum disease

German scientists have discovered a compound that can protect the oral microbiome while staving off gum disease. SciTechDaily reports that the compound doesn't let harmful bacteria grow. It has been made into a toothpaste that's unlike the usual ones, which kill even good bacteria. The researchers said that instead of killing harmful pathogens, the compound blocks their growth so that they can't exert their toxic effects. That way, beneficial bacteria can occupy otherwise inaccessible niches, rebuilding microbial balance.

FICTION VS FACT

Daily matcha consumption causes anaemia

It hinders iron absorption

No, it doesn't, though timing and amount of intake matters

By itself, matcha doesn't cause anemia. However, consuming excessive amounts at improper times without using alternate nutritional methods is a cause for concern. Drinking matcha right before or during meals, or within an hour after eating, leads to a substantial decrease in iron absorption. Research on tea drinking says this blocking effect reduces non-heme iron absorption by 60-70% when tea is consumed with food. If one avoids matcha at least 1-2 hours before or after iron-rich meals, pairing such meals with vitamin C-rich foods like citrus fruits or amla to enhance iron absorption, then it's fine to enjoy matcha

Veena V, CHIEF CLINICAL DIETICIAN, ASTER WHITEFIELD HOSPITAL, BENGALURU

As told to Jahnavi TR

Nagging neck & back pain? It may be overnight sleep strain

That's how 6-8-hour stress on joints, discs, nerves and muscles shows up

AnujaJaiswal@timesofindia.com

It often begins as a stiff neck in the morning that you keep ignoring till it turns into a daily discomfort. A 40-year-old MNC professional used to wake up repeatedly with neck pain. Initially, she thought it was screen time and work stress. But as pain worsened, spreading to her shoulders and triggering headaches, she sought medical help.

It wasn't, she was told, her routine but her high, firm pillow that kept her neck unnaturally bent through the night, putting continuous strain on the cervical spine. Once she switched to a medium-height pillow that supported her neck's natural curve, the pain eased within weeks.

HOW YOU SLEEP MATTERS, NOT JUST HOW MUCH YOU DO

Sleeping on side: It's the most recommended. It keeps neck and spine aligned, helps one breathe better, reduces snoring and acid reflux

Sleeping on back: Maintains neutral spine. Reduces knee and lower back pain with right pillow and knee support, but can worsen sleep apnea

Sleeping on stomach: Makes neck twist, puts strain on lower back

DOS
- Keep neck aligned with spine
- Use pillow of medium height for head, keep one between or under knees

DON'TS
- Use too high or too flat pillows
- Sleep on too soft or too hard mattresses

Silent strain on spine

Doctors say such cases are increasingly common, with poor sleep ergonomics quietly contributing to chronic neck and back pain. "Sleep position plays a significant role in spinal pain, especially in chronic or recurrent conditions," says Dr Rajesh Malhotra, former head of orthopaedics at AIIMS Delhi. "Poor positioning over 6-8 hours creates stress on joints, discs, nerves and muscles."

This overnight strain often shows up as stiffness and, in some cases, night-time tingling or pins and needles. It can also lead to pain radiating to the arms or lower back, linked to how the body is held during sleep. A 2021 systematic review published in Clinical Biomechanics found that pillow design and sleep posture directly influence spinal alignment and has a significant bearing on neck pain, stiffness and overall sleep quality.

Neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar from Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad says while strain often begins in muscles and joints, its impact can go deeper, into the nerves. "Sleeping in awkward positions — with the neck twisted or an arm compressed — can put pressure on peripheral nerves, leading to numbness, tingling or a 'dead arm' on waking," he points out. These symptoms are usually temporary and resolve as blood flow and nerve function normalise. But repeated poor alignment over months can aggravate underlying conditions such as cervical spondylosis or even a slipped disc.

Don't ignore:
- Daily neck or back pain
- Stiffness lasting more than 30-60 mins
- Tingling or numbness
- Pain radiating to arms or legs

NECK PAIN CAN ALSO CAUSE...

Headache: Shared nerve pathways make upper neck stiffness trigger cervicogenic headache felt in temples or forehead

Back pain: As muscles, connective tissues run from neck down the spine, neck tightness can increase strain on upper and lower back, causing widespread pain

Good posture, bad posture

Doctors say morning stiffness is often posture-related if it eases within 15-30 minutes of movement. But persistent symptoms — especially stiffness lasting more than 30-60 minutes, ongoing pain, or numbness — may signal conditions such as arthritis and shouldn't be ignored, stresses Dr Kumar. Distinguishing the type of pain is key: muscular pain is typically dull and localised while nerve-related pain is sharper, may radiate along the arm or leg, and is often accompanied by tingling, numbness or weakness. "Persistent neurological symptoms, especially pain travelling to limbs, weakness, or difficulty in movement need a doctor's attention," he says.

> One should aim to maintain a neutral spine — preserving natural curves of the neck and back, with the head, shoulders and hips aligned
>
> **Dr Rajesh Malhotra,** ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

Sleeping on the stomach is most harmful as it twists the neck and strains the lower back, explains Dr Malhotra. "One should aim to maintain a neutral spine — preserving natural curves of the neck and back, with the head, shoulders and hips aligned." He recommends side sleeping as the most suitable position, with the head aligned to the spine and a pillow between the knees. Back sleeping can also support alignment if the pillow height is appropriate and there is support under the knees.

Sleep position doesn't just influence pain; it directly shapes how well you rest, maintains sleep specialist Dr J C Suri. "There is no universal best position. It varies from person to person, depending on comfort and underlying conditions such as back pain, sleep apnea, acid reflux or respiratory issues. The ideal position is one that allows you to wake up feeling refreshed, without pain or discomfort," he says.

Dr Suri also endorses side sleeping, saying it's generally better for breathing and can reduce snoring and sleep apnea. Sleeping on the left side may also help reduce acid reflux. However, while back sleeping may help spinal alignment in some people, it can worsen breathing in others, he adds.

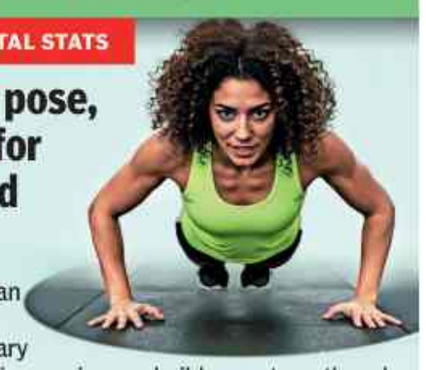
Sleep quality depends on several factors such as duration, timing, continuity and depth. And posture can influence many of these. "Poor positioning can affect breathing and circulation, and lead to repeated micro-awakenings that fragment sleep. The result: even after 7-8 hours in bed, a person may wake up not feeling rested," says Dr Suri.

Beyond posture, bedding plays a critical role. "A wrong pillow can negate even a good sleep position. If it's too high or too flat, a pillow can keep the neck under strain for hours, turning rest into a source of pain," Dr Malhotra points out. As for the mattress, he says a medium-firm one helps support one's body weight evenly without forcing the spine into an unnatural curve. If symptoms continue despite correcting sleep posture and bedding, doctors advise medical evaluation.

TIPS, TRENDS & TECH

KNOW YOUR VITAL STATS

Hold that pose, it's good for your blood pressure



Struggling to fit an exercise regime into your sedentary routine? Isometric exercise can build core strength and ease hypertension at one go, without gym time, burpees, step counts. Here's how

No-pressure workout

A 2023 meta-analysis of trials published in the past three decades studied around 16,000 people to compare how effective three isometric holds are in lowering BP:

Handgrip: Squeezing ball or similar resistance device

Leg extension: Sitting and raising resistance band or dumbbell with feet

Wall squat: Leaning against wall, lowering hips to be in sitting pose without chair

■ 2-min bouts of holding pose, 4 times, with recovery break of minute or two

■ 14-min session, 3 days a week, for 2 weeks

■ Results showed these holds were better than cardio, high-intensity interval training, weight training and combined training, and almost as good as BP medicines

> **The isometric wall squat, as long as it's done properly, is probably safer from a cardiovascular and musculoskeletal perspective than other types of exercise**
>
> **Jim Wiles,** META-ANALYSIS CO-AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR OF EXERCISE SCIENCE, CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY, UK

Why hold works

- Holding a pose contracts one or more muscles, which compresses blood vessels and cuts off oxygen
- Brain signals for more oxygen to that muscle which, along with resistance of holding pose, raises blood pressure
- When you ease pose, muscle contraction stops and blood vessels expand, letting in more blood which reduces BP
- Repetition can lead to lower BP in the long run

Benefits beyond BP

1. Stimulates blood vessels, reduces stiffening of arteries, improves cardiac function
2. Signals brain to 'turn on' motor units (nerves going into contracted muscle) which can boost muscle strength and improve athletic performance
3. Good way for sedentary people, older adults to turn more active

Sources: BBC

Email your feedback to **toihealth.plus@timesofindia.com** with Health Plus in the subject line. Please mention your name and city

SDPO in Odisha booked for sexual harassment, shifted

Bhubaneswar: A DSP-rank officer in Odisha's Nayagarh district has been booked on charges of sexually harassing a woman complainant, prompting the SP to remove him from the post of sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of Khandapada on Tuesday. The action follows a complaint lodged on April 13 by the 31-year-old woman from Nayagarh district. TNN

6 wedding party members die in MP road accident

Barwani: Six wedding party members died when their car collided head-on with an empty fuel tanker in Madhya Pradesh's Barwani district on Tuesday. The accident occurred on the Khandwa–Vadodara National Highway. The severity of the impact left the car mangled, and it took rescuers nearly an hour to extricate the victims. TNN

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Deputy Manager (Inspection)-Electrical		3	
Total		10	

*No. of vacancies indicated are only tentative. Reservation and relaxation for PwDs (Persons with Disabilities) shall be as per GOI (Government of India) guidelines.
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HRD/Rectt./Advt./2026-27/03

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Important Dates:
• Last date for submission of online applications, payment of application fee, **07.05.2026** • Last date for submission of hard copy of application along with enclosures: **13.05.2026** • Last date for submission of nominations /applications/CVs for Chair Professor: **13.05.2026**
The downloaded application form and CVs, along with all requisite enclosures, should reach the Recruitment and Assessment Cell (RAC), Holkar Bhavan, BHU, on or before 13.05.2026.
For detailed information, eligibility criteria, and application procedure, please visit: www.bhu.ac.in/rac
Date: 08.04.2026 **REGISTRAR**

Bank of Baroda
Notice for Recruitment of Meritorious Sportspersons in Clerical Cadre in Bank of Baroda on Regular Basis
Bank of Baroda, one of India's largest Banks is looking for Meritorious Sportspersons to be recruited in Clerical Cadre on regular basis:

Discipline	Location	Gender	Vacancies
Cricket	Delhi	Male	4
	Mumbai	Male	5
Kabaddi	Mumbai	Male	6
	Mumbai	Female	5
Table Tennis	Chennai	Male	1
	Mumbai	Female	1
Football	Mumbai	Male	8
Total		30 (24 Male, 06 Female)	

Please note that the number of vacancies mentioned above are provisional and may vary according to the actual requirement of the Bank.
Bifurcation of vacancies into required sports discipline / specialization (e.g. Batsman or Fast Bowler in Cricket) along with Eligibility criteria (age, qualification & experience), requisite fees and other details are available on Bank's website. Interested candidates are advised to visit the Bank's website **https://bankofbaroda.bank.in** ➡ Career Page ➡ Current Opportunities ➡ Recruitment of Sports person on Regular Basis in clerical cadre Advt No. BOB/HRM/REC/ADVT/2026/09.
Candidates are advised to go through the detailed advertisement, ensuring their eligibility & other details before applying and remitting fees.
Any addendum/ corrigendum/ modification shall be notified only on the Bank's website.
Date for filling Online Application & Payment of Fee: 22.04.2026 to 12.05.2026 (23:59 hours).
Place: Mumbai **Chief General Manager**
Date: 22.04.2026 **(HRM & Marketing)** (6/26-27)

KUTCH RAILWAY COMPANY LIMITED
Requires
Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Vacancy Notice No. - 01 Dated: 22/04/2026
Kutch Railway Company Limited (KRC), a Joint Venture of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited, Deendayal Port Authority, Adani Ports & SEZ Limited and Government of Gujarat is looking for a suitable candidate for the post of its Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Willing candidates may apply in the prescribed format latest by 21.05.2026. For more details about the vacancy including eligibility criteria, detailed vacancy notice, application procedure, prescribed application form, place of posting, emoluments, other T&Cs, etc., please visit website of the company: **www.kutchrail.org**
Company Secretary
Kutch Railway Company Limited

VISAKHAPATNAM PORT AUTHORITY
General Administration Department
[An Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Govt. of India]
VACANCY NOTIFICATION No:- C1/C2 (Common Rect) / 2026

1.	Name of the Post & Scale of Pay	1) Deputy Chief Law Officer (Class - 1) on Scale of Rs. 60000-180000 by Direct Recruitment 2) Senior Medical Officer (Specialist) (Class - 1) on Scale of Rs. 50,000-1,60,000 by Direct Recruitment 3) Medical Officer (Contract basis) (Consolidate Remuneration Rs. 75,000/- PM)
2.	No. of Posts	(1) Dy.CLO-01Post (UR) (2) SMO (Spl)-01 Post (UR) and (3) MO-04 Posts (03 UR & 01 OBC)
3.	Requisite Educational Qualifications & Experience	Please visit VPA Website (Careers Section) given below.
4.	Last date of submission of applications	For DCLO post & SMO (Spl) is 30.04.2026 For Medical Officer (Contract basis) is 15.05.2026

For detailed notification may visit careers section of VPA website: https://vpt.shipping.gov.in
-Sd/-
SECRETARY

Mumbai Port Authority
Advertisement No. HR-CON/03/2026
Dated:17/04/2026
Applications are invited from eligible Indian Nationals for the engagement of **Chief Strategic Advisor** purely **on contract basis** in Mumbai Port Authority.
For details regarding consolidated remuneration, educational qualifications, age, experience, last date of receiving application etc. visit our website **www.mumbaiport.gov.in (People & Career/ Jobs/Advertisements)** and submit applications in the prescribed format by downloading the same from our website.
MbPA-01-2026 **Manager (HR)**

Indian Institute of Management Raipur
CORRIGENDUM
Ref: IIMR/Rec./2026/01 **Dated: 01.04.2026**
Post of Deputy FA & CAO
Amendments:
(i) Para 2 (e): Regular or Fixed Term Contract (3 years, extendable).
(ii) Para 6 (j): Treasury Management & Financial Reporting added to key responsibilities.
For complete details, visit: **www.iimraipur.ac.in/recruitment**
REVISED LAST DATE: 12 MAY 2026

Punjab & Sind Bank
(A Government of India Undertaking)
H.O. HRD Dept.,
NBCC Building Block 3, Kidwai Nagar, New Delhi - 110023
Email: ho.hrd@psb.bank.in
Where service is a way of life
RECRUITMENT OF SPECIALIST OFFICERS - SECURITY IN PUNJAB & SIND BANK
Punjab & Sind Bank invites applications for 27 vacancies for Specialist Officers – Security Managers on regular basis. Details of vacancies are as under:-

S. No.	Post	Scale	Vacancy
1	Security Manager	MMGS II	27

For full details please visit Bank's web site **https://punjabandsind.bank.in** under the link **Recruitment**.
Chief General Manager (HRD)

RAILTEL CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD
(A Government of India Undertaking under Ministry of Railways)
Registered & Corporate Office: Plate-A, 6th Floor, Office Block-II, East Kidwai Nagar, New Delhi-110023.
website: www.railtel.in, CIN: L64202DL2000GOI107905
Indicative Notice for Contractual Recruitment in RailTel Corporation-Vacancy Notice No. RCIL-CO0HR(RECR)/2/2026 (CN . 54220)
RailTel Corporation of India Limited, a Navratna Public Sector Undertaking under Government of India, invites applications from Indian Citizens for the following vacancy at RailTel's Corporate Region in New Delhi:
- **Consultant (Medical) (Contract)-01 vacancy.**

Starting date of application acceptance: 25.04.2026
Last date of application acceptance: 16.05.2026
The detailed notice and application form for the above vacancy notice may be accessed on RailTel's website https://www.railtel.in/careers.html under 'current job openings' section.
Executive Director/HR

BHARAT ELECTRONICS LIMITED
TECH-PERFECT SOLUTIONS FOR THE NATION'S DEFENCE
(A Govt. of India Enterprise under the Ministry of Defence)
(CIN: L32309KA1954GOI000787)
Bharat Electronics Limited, a Navaratna category Central Public Sector Enterprise and India's leading professional Electronics Company, under Ministry of Defence, Government of India, requires the personnel for following post on Fixed Term Basis for it's Navi Mumbai Unit.

Sl. No.	Post	Discipline	No. of Vacancy
1	Medical Officer (On Fixed Term Basis)	Allopathy	1

For further details, please visit CAREERS link on website **http://www.bel-india.in**
Date: 22.04.2026
Phone: 022 39635724 **MANAGER (HR)**
'Har Ek Kaam Desh Ke Naam'

CONTRAPUNTO

You cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad

– CS LEWIS

Steadying The Applecart

That even the maker of iconic iPhone feels the need for deep reinvention has a lesson for all businesses

Come Sept, Apple will have a new CEO. John Ternus is a company veteran, and as a hardware man all along, he's been associated with most Apple products, from Macs to the very chips that now power Apple devices. His elevation is notable, obviously, because Apple has been the world's most valuable company for most of the past 16-17 years. Even now, it's a very close third, despite having almost no AI heft. More than that, the change at Apple matters because it proves once again, nobody is irreplaceable. Back in 2004, when Steve Jobs was recovering from cancer surgery, and current CEO Tim Cook was filling in for him, Cook had said, "Come on, replace Steve? No. He's irreplaceable." We're all wiser now.

Change at Apple also underlines the importance of companies reinventing themselves. Because if they don't, they fall off the ladder. Names like General Electric and IBM are proof. In Apple's case, there was the Jobs phase, when it built a reputation for innovation, attention to detail, and product design. That ethos ensured that, even 10 years after iPhone's launch, fans would queue up overnight to buy the latest model on launch day. But great design and engineering aren't enough to become, and remain, the top corporation. The second phase, under Cook, took care of that.

Cook's no showman like Jobs, but he has a reputation as a supply chain genius. He took the call to shut down Apple's costly factories, and outsource production to mostly Chinese vendors, before it was fashionable to do so. With precise demand forecasting and tight inventory management, Apple could satisfy millions of customers, while keeping its own liabilities small. This agile supply chain – together with the reputation for quality – took Apple past $1tn capitalisation in 2018. It introduced risks, no doubt, like the 2012 scandal over harsh working conditions at vendor factories, but Cook dealt with it confidently.

Cook's made Apple a well-oiled machine, with strong sales and profits, but rigour can't be a substitute for spark. Apple's fallen far behind in the AI race – its Siri assistant is powered by old rival Google's Gemini – and has been slow to introduce foldables, wearables and VR devices. Hence, the pivot to product innovation under Ternus now. The same spirit is visible at Tesla, which is looking beyond electric cars, to robotaxis and robots. History's witness that doing the same thing well – like Nokia and Kodak – can make you a medium-term success, but to win long-term, reinvent.

Pressure & Poison

That India is high on doping plus low on medals, reveals bitter economic & regulatory failures

Many years, India's anti-doping rule violations are the worst in the world. Now, the international organisation to combat doping has downgraded Athletics Federation of India, to the highest-risk, Category A bracket. Readers will be confused. Because they are used to seeing other countries that make such headlines, hold bagfuls of top-tier medals. Not India. At the Paris Olympics, for example, it finished 71st, with 'nada' gold. This riddle, however, is easily explained. The bulk of violations are at the developmental, rather than elite level. Not in international championships but state and national tourneys, university competitions, local meets. The issue persists predominantly at the grassroots.

If anyone is taking comfort in the absence of a state-sponsored programme designed to win Olympic glory, like Russia's was, it's cold comfort. India's best athletes may not be abusing drugs to win world titles, but lower-tier ones are downing them plentifully, to grab things far more modest. Such as cash awards, police recruitment, railway positions. These athletes aren't trying to beat a Kenyan or a German, just the person next to them at a district, state, national meet. This doping is a socioeconomic phenomenon, playing out at the bottom of the sporting pyramid.

For top athletes, India's downgrade will mean more stringent testing than their competitors. The real need for this, though, is at lower levels of the pyramid. It needs much better staffing of National Anti-Doping Agency. Currently, drug control officers leave local competitions mostly unregulated. Another major enforcement gap is that while athletes (often young, poor, and uneducated about what they're being given) absorb all the career-ending bans, coaches keep facilitating doping with very little personal risk. Only last Dec did Nada, for the first time, suspend (provisionally) a national-level athletics coach, for "trafficking or attempted trafficking of prohibited substances". Finally, sport is not played outside of society. Grassroots doping is only mirroring more widespread grassroots corruption – and desperation.

What's your vert?

Psychologists tell us that each of us belongs to one of several personality types

Jug Suraiya

Automobile tycoon Henry Ford once famously said that you could have his popular car in any colour you wanted – provided it was black.

Modern psychology is more liberal in granting us a choice of personality types. For years, psychologists categorised only two different personalities: extraverts and introverts.

Extraverts are very sociable and outgoing, and are the life and soul of a party, even when there is no party.

Introverts avoid large groups and gatherings when they can, and prefer to be left alone to pursue their individualistic interests, such as reading, or just thinking their own thoughts, instead of listening to the thoughts of others. Notable introverts include Isaac Newton, Einstein, Gandhi, and JK Rowling.

According to traditional psychology, you were either an introvert or an extravert. Couldn't make up your mind which? Toss a coin.

Then last year, a New York psychologist, Rami Kaminski, came up with a third vert to add to the introvert/extravert duality: the otrovert.

In his 2025 best-selling book, *The Gift of Not Belonging*, he defined an otrovert as someone who remains an 'eternal outsider' – otro being the Spanish word for other – in group situations, even while appearing to be friendly and socially engaged.

secondopinion

While otroverts might participate in collective activities – like joining a club, or taking an organised package tour – they tend to do their own outsider thing, such as having minimal interaction with fellow club members, or going off to do their own sightseeing instead of following the tour guide.

But it seems that even this trinity of verts wasn't enough. Psychology has since unearthed from the human psyche two more personality types: the ambivert and the omnivert. An ambivert is midway between an extravert and an introvert and is, as the name suggests, ambivalent about one or the other choice. An omnivert swings like a trapeze artist from being a full-fledged extravert some of the time to being a total introvert at other, randomly determined, times.

All these versions of vert are enough to make one's head spin. And give one vert-ego.

Why Peacemakers Are At Sea

US & Iran are taking a high-risk gamble over Hormuz. With doubts hanging over a scheduled second round of talks today, there are three ways this can go. Return to direct conflict. Iran negotiating under pressure. Or a prolonged stalemate

Alaa Zoubi

Columnist based in London

Although a second round of Pakistan-mediated talks between US and Iran is expected today, an air of uncertainty looms. This is because of recent events that have significantly changed the course of the crisis. In response to the US blockade of Iranian ports, Iran closed Hormuz once again. This saw Iran's IRGC specifically target India-flagged vessels attempting to pass through. Things escalated further when US navy fired upon and seized an Iran-flagged cargo ship. All of this highlights the fragility of the ceasefire, and the ongoing discussions about resuming talks.

The previous round of US-Iran talks in Islamabad was widely seen as a failure, but they did not fail in the conventional sense. With both sides negotiating in the belief that they can force an agreement on the other, the outcome demonstrated the limits of diplomacy, while leaving the door open for a second round of talks that may still take place, before the ceasefire window ends Wednesday.

After the failure to reach an agreement last time, Trump imposed a blockade on shipping from Iran. This was a sharp shift, from diplomacy to coercion, and it seems likely that although negotiations continue, tensions between the two sides will increase.

The US blockade came as a counterintuitive surprise to some, but it raises a fundamental question: Who determines access to the critical Strait of Hormuz, and at what cost? It's now central to this conflict, and its resolution. With about 20% of the world's oil supply typically passing through the Strait, it's a strategic and economic chokepoint for the global economy.

For Iran, the ability to threaten or disrupt shipping in the Strait remains a powerful bargaining chip, despite relentless diplomatic pressure and military threats. But disruption to Hormuz traffic cuts both ways – and while disruption to the Strait may exact a heavy price on the global economy, the US calculation is that it puts even more strain on Iran's already fragile financial position.

The truth is the closure of the Strait imposes costs on all sides that neither can bear indefinitely. US cannot be expected to enforce, and maintain, an open-ended naval blockade on its own.

There is, of course, the added complexity in the negotiations of the nuclear issue. Washington's demand here is clear: Tehran must never have a nuclear weapon, nor the ability to make or obtain one. For Iran, the right to enrich uranium on its soil is a matter of sovereignty.

This dispute has been at the centre of tensions for decades, but the way US is trying to shape an agreement has now radically changed. With the blockade, combined with existing sanctions and the cost of the war, US is looking to generate a rapid and painful economic penalty on Iran, forcing it to make concessions towards a quick deal.

Image: AI

This is a huge gamble. Iran's response to US pressure over the blockade so far, suggests that the risk of renewed conflict is very real. US has clear military superiority, and the possibility of a limited ground operation, or further strikes on Iranian targets, cannot be dismissed. But the recent conflict has shown that Iran does not need to match the strength of American, or Israeli, forces. It only has to make passage through Hormuz uncertain, through asymmetric tactics and naval harassment, imposing continuing costs on all sides, and making it a test of who is willing to endure the damage over time.

Iran has also threatened that its allies, the Houthis in Yemen, could disrupt shipping in Red Sea, threatening access to Suez Canal. Any disruption here would affect about 15% of world trade.

Another option for Iran is to negotiate under pressure. US and Iran have discussed the next round of peace talks following Pakistani mediators' visit to Tehran last week. US will enter the talks with some leverage, having demonstrated its willingness to try and coerce Iran economically, and the longer the coercion continues, the narrower Iran's political space for compromise will become.

Although Iran may be able to mitigate some effects of the blockade, by shipping from its eastern ports or by storing crude oil temporarily, estimates of its onshore storage capacity vary significantly. Some assessments indicate that Iran may be able to store crude for several weeks, and potentially up to two months at current production levels, before being forced to curtail output. This suggests that, while disruptions to shipping would still impose serious economic strain, the impact may not be as immediate as previously assumed.

A third possibility is a prolonged stalemate, with the sides locked in disagreement yet reluctant to escalate militarily, resulting in lasting economic disruption and continued instability in the maritime domain. Although Iran might enjoy this ambiguity in the short term, its advantage will quickly expire if it can't export its own hydrocarbons.

For US, the blockade of Hormuz requires expensive enforcement, and continued tolerance on the part of allies and global markets. Energy prices are swinging wildly. Washington believes that the economic cost imposed on Iran will outweigh the broader disruption to the global market, but it's unclear how long this assumption will hold.

Ultimately, US wants to fully restrict Iran's nuclear programme, while Iran wants its sovereign rights recognised without strict limits. The blockade tries to close this gap by applying pressure, but pressure alone does not change either side's reasoning. Instead, it raises the renewed risk of more direct conflict.

The writer is a research assistant with Royal United Services Institute

Edwardian Offensive In Darjeeling Hills

Bengal's is a hot election. North Bengal's, probably, the hottest. There's, of course, TMC vs BJP. But the most interesting story is of a bakery owner, Ajoy Edwards, leading a subregional challenge

Jordan Kinchum Tshering Namchu

Four roads converge at the heart of Darjeeling – the Chowrasta, a bustling promenade flanked by cafés and souvenir shops, a central point for tourists, and the square for public gatherings, rallies and cultural events. Chowrasta has become a metaphor for the region's shifting identity movements, electoral ambitions and competing visions of governance.

Political mood in Darjeeling Hills – six crucial assembly seats – increasingly mirrors this plaza. In 2021, BJP won five, one went to an Independent. Just as passersby at Chowrasta pause to choose direction, voters in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, in Matigara Naxalbari (SC), Siliguri and Phansidewa (ST), stand at a similar crossroads. Which political path holds real promise? Which would lead them into another meandering detour?

Dominated by Nepali-speaking Indian Gorkha community, sizeable numbers in the region have struggled in the run-around for 'provenance' documentation as part of SIR. SIR may be bureaucratic in principle, but has been widely interpreted as political, stirring anxieties in Darjeeling Hills, where questions of identity, citizenship and statehood remain sensitive.

POLLS 2026 Bengal, TN, Assam, Kerala

To the fights. BJP's and TMC's local allies are in contest. Anit Thapa's BGPM, formed in 2021, is in alliance with TMC. Gorkhaland agitation parties GJM-GNLF are with BJP. Competition has sharpened with new subregional party, IGJF (Indian Gorkha Janshakti Front) in the fray. Not in alliance with any state or national party, IGJF was reconstituted from Hamro Party that had merged with Congress.

IGJF's chief Ajoy Edwards, owner of the iconic Glenary's bakery, is contesting from Darjeeling as an Independent, banking on his popularity for "balancing" Gorkhaland identity and his development work. His stance: "No TMC. No BJP. No Congress. No party. No control."

If the region once had an uncompromising demand for a separate Gorkhaland state, the electoral mood now is more layered and transactional. Voters no longer deliberate solely on which party will champion statehood. They're talking, who can deliver immediate, tangible improvements in infra, wages, education, healthcare, governance.

Of course, outcomes for these issues are more contingent on how Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) prioritises and allocates its budget. Formed in 2012, GTA is the semi-autonomous solution to Bimal Gurung-led Gorkha Janmukti Morcha's (GJM) Gorkhaland agitation.

Since its formation, GTA's the arena of power play for subregional parties, on whom state and national parties now piggyback. GTA's institutionalisation has neither diminished the emotional resonance of Gorkhaland, nor resolved it, but has compelled political parties to rewrite their manifestos, along the intersecting axes of identity and resource-distribution politics.

BGPM won GTA elections in 2022. Its alliance with Trinamool helped it become the dominant political force. This time, this coalition presents itself as a "stable alternative", capable of delivering services, and putting a stop to agitations and factional violence that once defined hill politics.

Via this tie-up, TMC gained political oxygen in Darjeeling Hills. Targeted welfare, cash-transfer schemes Lakshmir Bhandar, and Swasthya Sathi, have helped TMC expand its footprint in, importantly, public perception too.

But BGPM, contesting in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong, invites scepticism – promises of development and welfare are, very often, weighed against the perceived dilution of statehood aspirations, central to Gorkha identity.

Across the aisle, BJP has long sought to cast itself as best positioned to deliver a "permanent political solution" to the "Gorkhaland question". It has pursued this through two main strategies: promising Scheduled Tribe recognition for 11 ethnic groups under broader Gorkha identity and by forging tactical alliances with GNLF and GJM, once the primary engines of the statehood movement.

As elections near, on April 23, BJP is attempting to revive identity-centric politics, through its local partners, while talking up GTA's alleged corruption. But, perception is BJP's been unable to fulfil its pledge of a timely, definitive solution.

Against TMC and BJP alliances, newbie IGJF's appeal lies in Edwards' hands-on development work on small-scale infra projects. He foregrounds Gorkhaland as IGJF's raison d'être and seeks to fill a "vacuum in hill politics".

Favoured among youth, his party's savvy use of social media has also won him followers. But can IGJF translate enthusiasm, for its identity-driven welfare-oriented politics into an electoral score, will be known only on May 4.

Meanwhile, GNLF and GJM, are burdened by echoes of agitations that exhausted public faith, without achieving Gorkhaland, making it difficult for them to redefine their roles beyond memory. GJM's renewed alliance with BJP is a bid to regain relevance, but internal fractures continue to weaken the party.

In Darjeeling Hills, slogans alone cannot persuade, governance without identity holds no weight. Electoral victory will favour contenders who can honour aspirations of "belonging" and ensure equitable resource distribution.

The writer is researcher, IIT Bombay

Calvin & Hobbes

MOST PEOPLE DONT KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A CHILD PRODIGY, SO THAT'S WHY I'M WRITING MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY.
DOES YOUR MAGNANIMITY KNOW NO BOUNDS?
GENIUS HAS ITS OBLIGATIONS.
HEY, HOW DO YOU SPELL "BOOGERS"?

Sacredspace

Look at a tree, a flower, a plant. Let your awareness rest upon it. How still they are, how deeply rooted in Being. Allow nature to teach you stillness.

Eckhart Tolle

Species And Elements Living Together Happily

Narayani Ganesh

The similarities between South and East Asian cultures and the Earth's natural networks, are uncanny. Among Asian people, you cannot have a standalone relationship with any one individual. And when it comes to our relationship with the planet, you cannot expect to engage with just one element or species.

You don't get to marry that one individual; you end up marrying the entire family, perhaps even the entire community – this is a popular statement when a foreigner seeks to marry someone from, say, India or any other South Asian or even East Asian country or community. That's because family roots run deep; you are never disconnected, at least, most of the time, with most of your relatives. Indeed, there are fissures and fractures in these families, too, and yet, there remains that interconnection that is difficult to erase completely. That's the nature of the cultural beast. This is also true of Earth's natural networks.

Both flora and fauna, as well as the elements, and human beings, are all interconnected. Habitats are crucial to survival of species. "You cannot begin to preserve any species of animal unless you preserve the habitat in which it dwells. Disturb or destroy that habitat and you will exterminate the species as surely as if you had shot it. So, conservation means that you have to preserve forest and grassland, river and lake, even the sea itself. This is not only vital for the preservation of animal life generally, but for the future existence of man himself – a point that seems to escape many people," wrote the popular naturalist and author, Gerald Durrell.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Natural elements have always inspired us to become better human beings. Many metaphors indicate this – when we say to someone to 'stay grounded', we are asking that person to try and become stable like Mother Earth as the planet symbolises solidity, as do mountains and rocks. Water is evoked to convey the diligence and consistency it exhibits as it flows relentlessly – above, below and around obstacles – as it winds its way towards its goal. Its strength is its fluidity and adaptability. Air is omnipresent; as pran, it is the giver of life, it is all-encompassing. Fire symbolises energy and passion – recruiters look for 'fire in the belly' of potential employees, as it is the fire-like passion that will drive them to perform with energy.

Walking, running, cycling, and swimming are said to be wonderful ways to stay fit as these involve not only body movements; they put you in close touch with the earth, sky, air and water, all natural elements. Swimming is also metaphor for navigating choppy waters of life, staying afloat, and finally, reaching ashore.

When we celebrate April 22 each year as Earth Day, the idea is to jog our collective memory lest we forget that we are all interlinked, that we cannot survive without one another. Such special days remind us to renew our resolve to work towards less exploitation and more enabling lifestyles and acknowledge our deep relationship with the elements and other species. The sooner we value and nurture these symbiotic relationships, the more likely that we will all manage to conserve natural systems, habitats and species, and live sustainable lives that promote harmony, good health, and peace.

ganeshnarayani@yahoo.com.

Can BJP turn anti-incumbency sentiment into victory in Bengal?

BJP has mounted an all-out campaign to unseat Mamata in Bengal, but despite anti-incumbency, Suvendu Adhikari's rise and Modi's campaign blitz, cultural missteps, voter alienation and Didi's enduring appeal complicate its path

A TASTE OF BENGAL: On the campaign trail in Bengal's Jhargram, PM Narendra Modi has jhalmuri from a local stall; (below) leader of the opposition Suvendu Adhikari may have to rely on the PM's star power to stop Mamata Banerjee from governing the state for a fourth straight term

BJP'S UPS & DOWNS IN BENGAL

Lok Sabha Polls		Vote Share (%)
2014	2 Seats	17.0
2019	18	40.6
2024	12	39.1
Assembly Polls		
2016	3 Seats	10.2
2021	77	38.0

For five years, BJP laid siege to Mamata Banerjee's bastion of West Bengal. Now, with the first phase of polling set to begin in the state on April 23, BJP — the largest party in India, and the world — has pulled out all the stops to convince Bengal's voters that the time for change, or *paribartan*, has arrived.

The BJP will deliver this *paribartan*. All voters have to do is reject Banerjee for her failures of governance, the systemic rot evident in the widespread mismanagement and abuse of power by Trinamool Congress's local *bahubalis*, shielded by a culpable administration and police. BJP has projected itself as the dependable alternative, the party of *bharosa*, and positioned itself as one that will provide a 'double-engine' sarkar — with a Narendra Modi-led govt at the Centre overseeing a state unit working under his stewardship. BJP has assured voters that Modi is the real choice and that candidates are merely his proxies across all 294 state assembly seats in Bengal.

BY INVITATION

Shikha Mukerjee

BJP's strategy over the past five years has been to stoke anti-incumbency sentiment on the one hand and polarise voters on the basis of religious identities on the other.

But what it lacked in the past was a local face. That changed in 2021, when Suvendu Adhikari — a one-time trusted lieutenant of Banerjee who had switched to the BJP — defeated her in Nandigram. The irony could not have been more stark. It was in Nandigram that Banerjee had led a grassroots protest against the then CPM govt's forced land acquisition for a chemical hub in the region. The protest, in which 14 people died, helped fuel the anti-Left movement that led to the CPM govt's ouster in 2011 after 34 years in office. Banerjee's loss there in 2021 to Adhikari — who had deep political roots in rural East Midnapore — immediately marked him out as a giant-killer and BJP's Bengal poster boy.

As leader of the opposition, Adhikari punched above his weight in taking on Banerjee, proving effective in dominating the news cycle and trying to corner his former leader. The problem for BJP is that no one has named him as the chief ministerial face for the 2026 state assembly election. Even so, he has been pitted against Banerjee in her home constituency of Bhowanipore; he is contesting from Nandigram too.

Having spent the five intervening years between elections uncovering every act of omission and commission by the TMC govt, and focusing on women's safety and law and order, BJP's campaign has nevertheless been less than exciting in many ways. It is not in a position to enter the political fight over the bizarre exclusions of the SIR process with the aim to 'Detect, delete, deport'. It is the only party in Bengal that has championed the Election Commission's flawed implementation. It is also the only party in the state that has energetically, but unsuccessfully, advocated for illegal refugee Hindus from Bangladesh to apply for citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. This has alienated the Matua Scheduled Caste community, once its staunch vote bank, as well as the Rajbanshi Scheduled Caste community, another key support base in North Bengal. An SIR process that demanded proof at every stage has left the Rajbanshis upset with BJP.

BJP's strongholds in Bengal since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections have been in North Bengal and in pockets of South Bengal along the border with Bangladesh, where it built its narrative around national security and *ghuspaithiyas* — or infiltrators — intent on changing the demography, and consequently, the politics of the region.

Nor have the BJP's inducements to women voters generated the enthusiasm they were clearly expected to. The reason is simple: BJP evidently believed its own interpretation that women voted for the cash as part of a larger transaction. It has failed to fathom that not all loyalties can be bought. It is this disconnect that probably led to the BJP losing the perception battle over the women's reservation bill. While the bill had been passed in 2023, BJP resurrected it now, in the middle of the polls, and linked it to a constitutional amendment that would allow for delimitation and raise the overall strength of Parliament. When this amendment was predictably defeated in Parliament, BJP tried to corner the Opposition by claiming that it had blocked the women's reservation bill. But that does not seem to have worked on the ground. In the popular perception, BJP is seen to have lost and the Opposition to have won.

There is also open scepticism over BJP's branding of itself as a party with a difference, with a disciplined cadre trained over the years in the ideology and codes of the party as well as its parent organisation, RSS. After the defections of over 40 top functionaries and more than 100 middle-rung netas from the Trinamool Congress between 2019 and 2021, BJP's claim to differentiation does not count for much. The infusion of new blood to expand the party's base may have been a good strategy, but it happened too fast.

The 2026 campaign around anti-incumbency is a consequence of Adhikari's tireless attacks on the failures of the TMC govt's performance, from the cash-for-jobs scandal to the massive outpouring of anger over the rape and murder of a junior doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. Adhikari has been indefatigable in keeping Trinamool Congress under pressure and ensuring that he makes headlines or goes viral on social media.

The extraordinary attention Adhikari succeeded in generating for the BJP should have made it a shoo-in in the 2026 state assembly election. But the fact that Modi is in Bengal personally, leading the blitzkrieg, supported by the party's organisational and political mastermind, Union home minister Amit Shah, as well as the BJP's star chief ministers, Yogi Adityanath and Himanta Biswa Sarma, and hundreds of other party functionaries, indicates that BJP needs extra manpower to back its local efforts.

Polarising voters on the basis of religious identities, sowing suspicion and dismay to create division, is a gamble in Bengal. The 39.1% of voters in the state who voted for BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha election may well have been overwhelmingly Hindu. But that does not mean that the 46.2% who voted for the Trinamool Congress in the same election were only Muslims. Even if one were to assume that Bengal's 27% Muslim population voted en bloc for Banerjee, a sizeable number of Hindus backed her too. Also, women — 53% of them — cutting across religious lines, voted for her.

In 2021, BJP was convinced that it would win 200 of the state assembly's 294 seats. Its confidence was based on its performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when it won an unprecedented 18 out of 42 seats. It was an extraordinary achievement because, in 2014, in the first Modi-wave election, BJP had won only two seats, with a vote share of 17%. In 2016, its vote share dropped to 10.3% and it won only three assembly seats. From three seats in 2016, it surged to 77 in the 2021 state assembly election, with a vote share of 38%.

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections were a turning point in BJP's position in Bengal. It emerged as a challenger to Mamata Banerjee, the leader of a regional party with all the limitations that come with being a single-state party

The data underscores the broader point that the 2019 Lok Sabha elections were a turning point in BJP's position in Bengal. It emerged as a challenger to Banerjee, the leader of a regional party with all the limitations that come with being a small party confined to a single state. Had BJP sustained its upward trajectory in Bengal in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, it would have been easy to predict that by the time the 2026 state assembly elections came around, the Trinamool Congress would be more likely to lose than win.

Three developments — the arrests and threats of deportation faced by migrant Bengali-speaking workers on the assumption that they were *ghuspaithiyas* from Bangladesh or Rohingyas; the out-of-the-blue controversy over the Bengali language and its misidentification as a "Bangladeshi language"; and the broader cultural friction this triggered — have highlighted the difference between BJP and Trinamool Congress. The controversy over food habits, the irrelevant face-off over extensions to Vande Mataram as the national song versus Jana Gana Mana, the national anthem, and small irritants like referring to Rishi Bankim Chandra as "Bankim Da" have stoked deep-seated prejudices against BJP in Bengal and played into Trinamool Congress's politics of presenting itself as a homegrown, grassroots party.

The writer is a senior Kolkata-based journalist

Anindya Chattopadhyay

BANKING ON WOMEN'S BACKING

Artists in a central Kolkata neighbourhood craft replica piggy banks, promotional material for Trinamool Congress highlighting the state govt's 'Lakshmir Bhandar' scheme, which provides financial assistance to women in the 25-60 age group. Women are seen as a key voing bloc for the Mamata Banerjee-led party

Cleared to vote, but missing from seat as NIA probes SIR protest

Mothabari in Bengal witnessed violence over SIR deletions. The crackdown that's followed has led many voters to flee the area

Tamaghna Banerjee & Subhro Maitra | TNN

Indranil Das

Women from some of the Mothabari households whose male members fled the area fearing the police and central crackdown that has followed the April 1 gherao of judicial officers who were hearing appeals against SIR deletions

In an ironic turn of events, villagers in Bengal's Mothabari who'd taken to the streets less than a month back fearing deletion from electoral rolls may now miss voting altogether — not because their names are gone from the voters' list, but because they have cleared out of the area in fear of falling into the clutches of National Investigation Agency (NIA).

With the central agency stepping up its probe into the April 1 gherao of judicial officers, hundreds of men have fled their homes fearing arrest, leaving behind near-deserted villages days before the area votes on April 23 in the first of Bengal's two-phased polls.

Two weeks after a midnight standoff in this otherwise obscure pocket of Malda drew national attention, Mothabari presents a stark, altered landscape. Doors remain shut through the day, courtyards lie empty and, in many homes, only women, children and the elderly wait — not for relief, but for the men who have disappeared.

"There are six members in our family. All our names were placed under adjudication, so my husband applied to restore our voting rights. He was never part of any violence. Still, police sent him a notice," said Jalili Bibi of Sadipur. "Now, four of our names have been cleared, but he is too afraid to return, even to vote." It's a similar tale in Jotgopal Kagmari village. Runa Laila's husband, Md Asmaul Basar (39), who runs an e-rickshaw battery shop, is on the run. "He wasn't part of any protest. He had gone to deliver an order. Someone has framed him and now the police are looking for him," she said. "Voting is no longer our priority. I just want him to be safe."

Arrests Spark Fear

Across Bengal, around 60.6 lakh names were sent for adjudication, of which 27 lakh were deleted. In Mothabari alone, 79,683 names were listed for judicial scrutiny, with 37,255 eventually deleted.

Seven judicial officers deputed for SIR adjudication work were gheraoed by an agitated mob on April 1. The officers, including women judges, had to remain confined for over nine hours inside a block development office before they were finally rescued. The incident escalated rapidly, prompting the Supreme Court to hand over the probe to NIA on April 6. The fallout, thereafter, has been swift and sweeping.

At least 52 people have been arrested so far. NIA has registered 12 cases and arrests have cut across party lines. An Indian Secular Front (ISF) worker was the first to be picked up by the central agency. That was followed by the arrest of Mothabari ISF candidate Maulana Shahjahan Ali Qadri and AIMIM leader Mofakkerul Islam by state CID. More recently, two Congress functionaries — close aides of Congress candidate Sayem Chowdhury — were arrested by NIA.

Chowdhury himself was detained for questioning from Alinagar and released after a night-long interrogation. He had his mobile phone seized for forensic analysis. In a video message after his release, he alleged political vendetta and denied any role in the violence.

But beyond the political sparring, the ground reality in Mothabari is quieter. The fear is widespread — and palpable. Even as adjudication restored some names, the aftermath of the April 1 violence has created a new barrier, one that no revision process can fix: voters present on paper, but absent on the ground.

Political Blame Game

In villages here, families say men have been leaving in batches since the NIA intensified its probe. Some have crossed into other districts, others are believed to be hiding in neighbouring states. Many have stopped answering calls.

"We told them not to stay here," said a middle-aged woman in Singapara, requesting anonymity. "Even if they are innocent, who will listen? If they are picked up, who will take care of us? His name is back on the voter list, but he won't return to vote," she says of her husband, who's fled the area.

The ground report suggests that, in several pockets, a significant number of adult men are currently missing. While there is no official count, the situation is attested to by empty village squares, shuttered shops, and the eerie stillness that settles in by evening.

Political reactions have only sharpened the divide. PM Modi said the episode points to a "Maha Jungle Raj", while Trinamool Congress (TMC) has accused opposition parties of instigating the unrest. BJP says it has moved beyond the SIR row and is focusing on development. "People here need better roads, clean water, a dedicated women's ward at the govt hospital, better schools and hostels," said BJP candidate Nibaran Ghosh. "The sitting MLA did little beyond building personal wealth."

Sabina Yasmin, who had won this seat for Congress in 2011 and 2016 and on a TMC ticket in 2021 was replaced this time by her new party, which has tasked Md Najrul Islam with retaining the seat. Islam blamed BJP for deleting the names of valid voters and accused Congress and ISF of fuelling fear among villagers. "Congress is trying to help BJP by creating conflict among voters who are still eligible," he said.

Congress candidate Chowdhury, however, alleged a broader conspiracy. "TMC, BJP and NIA have acted together to target us. People can see what is happening," he said. Caught in the crossfire are residents whose original grievance — the fear of losing their right to vote — now feels overshadowed. "We protested because our names were deleted," said a young voter whose elder brother has fled. "Now, even if the name is there, the person is not."

As dusk falls, the silence deepens. In several homes, women sit around mobile phones, waiting for calls from husbands and sons. For a village that rose in protest to reclaim its place on the electoral roll, the coming election may pass with many of its voters missing — not erased by the system this time, but by the consequences of challenging it.

OPS: Why a political veteran seeks a new 'sunrise' in Bodi

Jaya.Menon@timesofindia.com

O Panneerselvam during a rally earlier this month. While OPS, as he is widely known, has won this seat thrice — in 2011, 2016 and 2021 — for ADMK, he saw his vote share drop from over 56% in 2011 to 47% in 2021. He is fighting on a DMK ticket this time

At Palani Chettipatti, a panchayat town in Theni district, the early morning quiet is broken by drumbeats and the blare of DMK propaganda songs. Scores of men and women gather on the main road, holding up posters of chief minister M K Stalin and O Panneerselvam, or OPS, his new party associate.

For OPS, a three-time CM, it's a defiant shift in party allegiance — one that he took after ADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami stonewalled his repeated attempts to get back to the party. In the contest this time as DMK's Bodinayakkanur candidate, he gets out of his car and carefully climbs to a tempo van that has been repurposed as a campaign vehicle. His three-vehicle convoy weaves through a paid — yet enthusiastic — crowd as he greets them with folded hands. In his pocket, where J Jayalalithaa's photograph once rested, is now a profile of Stalin. The picture on his car dashboard has also flipped.

"Stalin will come back as CM. The Dravidian model of governance will be back," he says, to claps and cheers. He looks up at the dangerously hanging electric cables — and promises he would get them reinstalled.

"Raise your hands if you will vote for OPS," cries a partyman. Most people do as directed, and Panneerselvam looks pleased. A local resident, Visithra, 27, lifts her hand and her toddler's, too. "TVK has not come campaigning here yet," she says. "But I am not sure if my family, which always votes for ADMK, will vote for DMK."

Panneerselvam has recorded easy victories in Bodi thrice as an ADMK candidate. But this election may not be a cakewalk. ADMK candidate V T Narayanaswamy is a tough opponent. And OPS's rivals are accusing him of betraying 'Amma (J Jayalalithaa)'.

The talk in tea shops and street corners reveal a mix of support, scepticism, and cautious optimism. Some voters admire OPS's past heft and see his move to join DMK as driven by compulsions. Others question whether loyalty to Amma can be "so easily set aside". The office in his bungalow in Subburaj Nagar in Bodi sports three framed pictures: of Stalin, Udhayanidhi Stalin, and a smaller Jayalalithaa portrait hanging by the side.

Panneerselvam's dramatic change of allegiance marks not just a personal turning point, but a controversial ideological re-positioning. Long identified with ADMK founder MGR's legacy and Jayalalithaa's persona, Panneerselvam now aligns with DMK's Dravidian framework that emphasises social justice, rationalism, and development.

"His switching sides is a result of political necessity," says Mohammed Ali, a resident of Four Cross Road.

Bodinayakkanur has long been an ADMK bastion. The constituency's political identity has been shaped by deep-rooted loyalties, particularly among the dominant mukkulator community, which has historically leaned towards ADMK. In Tamil Nadu, party affiliations are not merely a matter of strategy; it is intertwined with community and loyalty.

For DMK, fielding Panneerselvam in Bodi signals an intent to breach an ADMK stronghold. His campaign blends personal outreach with narratives of good governance and development under Stalin's leadership.

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

GET YOUR FACTS FIRST, THEN YOU CAN DISTORT THEM AS YOU PLEASE — MARK TWAIN

BEN AFFLECK & MATT DAMON TO GET 'ROBIN WILLIAMS LEGACY OF LAUGHTER AWARD' TO RECOGNISE THEIR POWER OF STORYTELLING'

MADONNA OFFERS REWARD FOR RETURN OF VINTAGE COSTUMES SHE WORE AT COACHELLA: 'THESE ARE PART OF MY HISTORY'

US forces capture sanctioned oil tanker in Bay of Bengal: Pentagon

M/T Tifani Was Carrying Iranian Oil: US Officials

Washington: US forces have boarded an oil tanker previously sanctioned for smuggling Iranian crude oil in Asia, the Pentagon said on Tuesday, as it puts into place a global warning to track down vessels tied to Tehran. US forces "conducted a right-of-visit maritime interdiction" and boarded the M/T Tifani "without incident," the Pentagon said on social media.

The Tifani was captured in the Bay of Bengal — between India and Southeast Asia — and was carrying Iranian oil, according to a US defence official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing military operation. The US military will decide in the next four days what to do with the vessel, such as tow it back to the US or turn it over to another country, the official said.

It's the latest move in the US war on Iran to stop any ship tied to Tehran or those suspected of carrying supplies that could help its govt, from weapons and oil to metals and electronics. The announcement comes ahead of the expiration of an already tenuous ceasefire between the US and Iran, and as Pakistan attempts to broker talks between Washington and Tehran.

It is the second vessel linked to Iran that has been interdicted by the US military.

The US navy attacked and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship on Sunday that it said had tried to evade its blockade of Iranian ports, with President Donald Trump saying an American destroyer blew a hole in the ship's engine room.

The Pentagon on social media described the Tifani as "stateless" despite it being a Botswana-flagged vessel.

"As we have made clear, we will pursue global maritime enforcement efforts to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing material support to Iran — anywhere they operate," the Pentagon announcement said, echoing previous statements from Trump administration officials. "International waters are not a refuge for sanctioned vessels."

General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last week that the enforcement actions would extend beyond Iranian waters and the area under control of US Central Command. AP

Reuters

Life goes on as usual in Tehran amid ceasefire between US & Iran on Tuesday

China denies links to ship seized in Gulf

China on Tuesday denied any links to the Iranian cargo ship seized by the US in the Gulf allegedly containing chemical materials to manufacture missiles.

"As far as I know, the vessel seized by the US is a foreign container ship. China rejects any false association and speculation," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a press briefing in Beijing, reacting to allegations by former US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley.

In a post on X, Haley claimed that the ship seized by the US was headed from China to Iran and is linked to chemical shipments for missiles. "It refused repeated orders to stop. Another reminder that China is helping prop up Iran's regime — a reality that can't be ignored," Haley said.

A US naval ship enforcing the blockade of ships going to Iranian ports fired at the cargo ship when it reportedly failed to heed calls to stop. The US Marines later boarded the ship and seized it. The Iranian military warned that it would respond to the US' action against the container ship. PTI

Pentagon seeks $75bn for drones used in Iran war

The Pentagon's largest-ever budget request earmarks $75 billion for drones and technologies to counter them, according to defence officials. The drone-funding proposal includes $54.6 billion for the Defense Autonomous Working Group, or DAWG, from just $225.9 million this year. That would appear to be the largest single year-over-year boost of any defence programme or office, meaning it's likely to draw particular congressional and public scrutiny in an already eye-catching $1.5 trillion request that's 42% larger than this year's budget.

The big boost for the Pentagon's little-known drone unit comes as the US and Israeli war against Iran illustrates how drones can help level the playing field against armed forces. Tehran has sent volleys of its cheap Shahed one-way attack drones into energy facilities and other buildings across the Persian Gulf and closing the Strait of Hormuz. BLOOMBERG

US imposes new sanctions against suppliers of weapons to Iran

Washington: The US imposed new sanctions on Tuesday targeting 14 people and companies that help Iran obtain weapons as Tehran works to rebuild its ballistic missile inventories after US-Israeli attacks, the treasury department said. The targets, which also include aircraft, are based in Iran, Turkiye and the UAE and were cited for their involvement in procuring or transporting weapons or components on Iran's behalf, treasury said in a statement.

The new sanctions come as Washington and Tehran are at a standoff over whether to begin a second round of talks to reach a deal that would keep the Strait of Hormuz open and bring an end to the US-Israel war on Iran.

"As the US continues to deplete Iran's ballistic missile inventories, the regime is seeking to reconstitute its production capacity," treasury said. "Iran is increasingly relying on Shahed-series one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicles to target the US and its allies, including energy infrastructure in the region." REUTERS

Iran had voiced concern about safety of team

▶Continued from P1

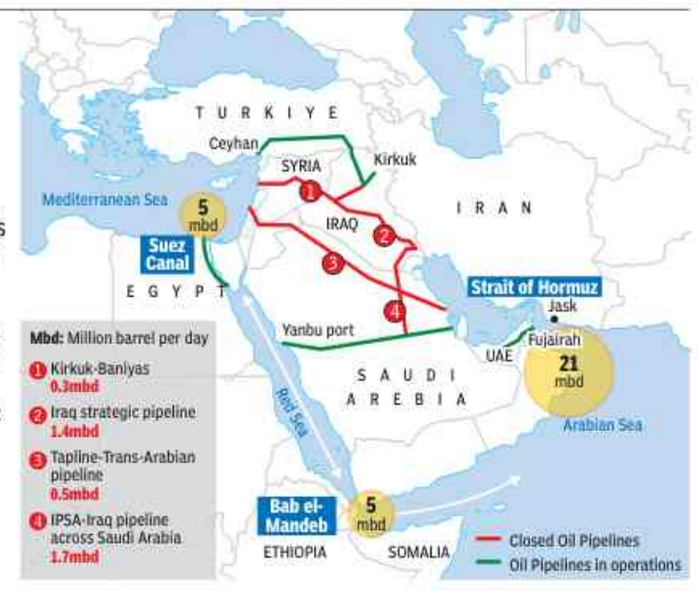
The US president has called or responded to calls from at least six reporters since Sunday amid jokes on late-night circuits about how journalists are now putting their phone on do-not-disturb. The jokes aside, Washington and Tehran seemed to be playing a game of travel chicken for much of the day. Nor is there any sign they are anywhere near closing the wide gulf — in their demands, grievances, and expectations — that could end the conflict which has put enormous stress on the world economy.

Washington embarrassed itself repeatedly on Monday, flitting between Vance going, not going, will be going, and has gone — only for Vance's motorcade to pull up at the White House after some media outlets said he had left. Iran, with the advantage of sharing a border and therefore proximity to Pakistan, appeared to be waiting for Vance to fly out before even committing to be at the talks.

Despite the threat by the US president of having its civilisation annihilated and being bombed back to the Stone Age, Tehran has not keeled over. If anything, Iran has rejected talks "under coercion". Tehran's supporters have also voiced concern about the safety of its delegation if the talks do not go well.

BYPASSING THE HORMUZ DISRUPTION

International Energy Agency calls the choking of Strait of Hormuz due to the US-Israel-Iran war the **largest supply disruption on record**, bigger than oil shocks of 1970s and the loss of Russian pipeline gas after Ukraine war combined. Some possible alternatives for West Asia to export its oil and gas:



Existing Pipelines

EAST-WEST PIPELINE (SAUDI ARABIA)
Can transport up to **7 million bpd** of crude to Red Sea port of Yanbu, with effective exports estimated at **4.5 million bpd**. From Yanbu, shipments can travel to Europe via Suez Canal or south via Bab el-Mandeb strait to reach Asia
Risk: Houthi attacks

HABSHAN–FUJAIRAH PIPELINE (UAE)
The 360-km pipeline runs from Abu Dhabi's Habshan to Fujairah on the Gulf of Oman, outside Hormuz. It has capacity of about **1.5–1.8 million bpd**
Risk: Drone hits at Fujairah terminal

KIRKUK-CEYHAN PIPELINE (IRAQ-TURKIYE)
Runs from Iraq's Kirkuk to Turkiye's Ceyhan via the Kurdistan region. Last month, Iran began pumping **170,000 bpd**, with plans to reach **250,000 bpd** through Turkiye, Jordan & Syria

GOREH-JASK PIPELINE (IRAN)
Iran may be able to utilise the Jask terminal, fed by the **1 million bpd Goreh-Jask pipeline**, to bypass the Strait, the IEA says. Though construction of terminal is incomplete, but a loading from Jask was tested in 2024

Possible Alternative Routes

IRAQ-OMAN PIPELINE
Iraq is considering a Basra-to-Duqm pipeline to reach the Gulf of Oman. The project is in early conceptual stages

IRAQ-JORDAN PIPELINE
The proposed **1 million bpd** Basra-Aqaba pipeline would bypass Hormuz to reach the Red Sea. Despite 2022 approval, the project remains stalled due to cost, security, and political obstacles

GULF-SEA OF OMAN CANAL
A canal bypassing Hormuz remains conceptual. Cutting through the Hajar Mountains to Fujairah presents extreme engineering hurdles and could cost hundreds of billions of dollars

SOURCE: **REUTERS**

PM office pressed me on Mandelson appointment, says fired UK official

A former top British bureaucrat said he felt political pressure to clear Peter Mandelson to become ambassador to the US, in dramatic public testimony sure to further imperil the leadership of PM Keir Starmer.

Olly Robbins — a civil servant who was the most senior official in the foreign office until Starmer fired him last week — told lawmakers on Tuesday that the prime minister's office had a "dismissive approach" to Mandelson's security vetting. No. 10 created an "atmosphere of pressure" to "get it done" by publicly announcing the appointment before vetting was completed, Robbins said in his high-stakes appearance before the UK's 'foreign affairs select committee'.

Robbins' account will place Starmer under further scrutiny while he battles allegations from opposition parties that he misled parliament when he said "due process" was followed during Mandelson's appointment. Members of parliament will be able to immediately parse the duelling accounts in an emergency debate secured by the opposition Conservative Party, compounding the danger for Starmer.

"My office was under constant pressure," Robbins said, adding there was "never any interest" from Starmer's private office in 10 Downing St. in finding out the results of the vetting process. "There was an atmosphere of constant chasing," Robbins said, describing the contact as very frequent if not daily.

Nonetheless, Robbins argued the pressure he felt from Starmer's office didn't impact the decision to approve Mandelson's clearance, insisting he was able to put in place mitigations to resolve the problems raised. He also confirmed he didn't share information about Mandelson's vetting with senior officials and advisers in Starmer's office.

Robbins criticised Starmer for making the decision to appoint Mandelson, announcing it, and securing approval from the Biden administration for the posting before he had completed his security vetting. In a further revelation, Robbins testified that Starmer's office had also sought an ambassadorial role for his former communications chief Matthew Doyle, who was later suspended from the Labour Party over his alleged links to a convicted sex offender. Doyle has apologised for his past association with the man. BLOOMBERG

UK PM Keir Starmer (L); former head of foreign office Olly Robbins

Arrests, hangings, blackout: Iran's wartime repression

Paris: Iran has stepped up repression during the war with high-profile executions and hundreds of arrests, activists said on Tuesday, urging Washington to put human rights at the centre of any talks with the Islamic republic.

There has been no let-up during the two-week ceasefire now due to end, with hangings of convicts seen as political prisoners a near daily occurrence and people arrested on charges such as sending videos to a media outlet abroad, according to rights groups.

This has come against the background of severe internet restrictions that monitor Netblocks said was a blackout that had now left Iranians disconnected from global networks for 53 days. "The immediate release of all political prisoners arrested before or after the outbreak of the war must be a central condition of any agreement with the Islamic republic," said Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, director of Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights.

IHR said on Tuesday that at least 3,646 people had been arrested since the war broke out on Feb 28, with at least 767 of the cases reported after the start of the ceasefire on April 8. Charges include espionage, transmitting images or coordinates of sensitive locations to foreign-based media, attempting to establish operational cells or possessing a Starlink internet terminal.

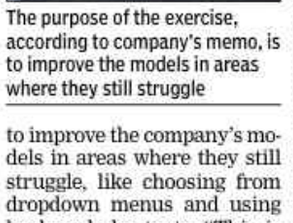
Iranian authorities on Tuesday also executed an eighth man over protests in Jan, which rights groups said were put down in a deadly crackdown that left thousands of people dead.

Since executions resumed on March 19, Iranian authorities have also executed eight members, all men, of the People's Mujahedin (MEK) opposition group, which is banned in Iran. IHR warned that there was a risk of more executions with "hundreds of protesters currently facing death penalty charges, with at least 30 having already been sentenced to death".

US President Trump on Tuesday told Iran it could boost the chances of success in peace talks with Washington by freeing eight women that he said face execution. According to rights groups including the US-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, one woman named as Bita Hemmati has been sentenced to death over the protests on charges of throwing concrete blocks from a building onto police.

IHR said more than 100 civil society activists had been arrested since the war broke out, including prize-winning rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was detained on April 2. "The Islamic republic showed in Jan that it has no qualms about killing protesters on a massive scale," said Roya Boroumand, co-founder of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre. "In that context, silence around the fate of Iranians in the current talks can reassure the regime that the political cost of another mass crackdown will be low," she said. AFP

AFP



A structure adorned with Iranian flags and a portrait of the Khamenei as a young man is placed in a park in Tehran on Tuesday

Meta to use employee mouse clicks, keystrokes to train AI

New York: Meta is installing new tracking software on US-based employees' computers to capture mouse movements, clicks and keystrokes for use in training its artificial-intelligence models, part of a broad initiative to build AI agents that can perform work tasks autonomously, the company told staffers in internal memos seen by Reuters.

The tool will run on a list of work-related apps and websites and will also take snapshots of the content on employees' screens for context, according to one memo, posted by a staff AI research scientist on Tuesday in a dedicated internal channel for the company's model-building Meta SuperIntelligence Labs team.

The purpose of the exercise, according to the memo, was to improve the company's models in areas where they still struggle, like choosing from dropdown menus and using keyboard shortcuts. "This is where all Meta employees can help our models get better)," it said. Meta spokesperson Andy Stone said the data collected would not be used for any other purpose besides model training and that safeguards were in place to protect sensitive content. REUTERS

Reuters

The purpose of the exercise, according to company's memo, is to improve the models in areas where they still struggle

US labour secy quits after power abuse allegations

Washington: Labour secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer is out of President Trump's cabinet, the White House said Monday, after multiple allegations of abusing her position's power, including having an affair with a subordinate and drinking alcohol on the job. Chavez-DeRemer is the third Trump cabinet member to quit after Trump fired his embattled homeland security secretary Kristi Noem in March and ousted attorney general Pam Bondi this month.

"Labour secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer will be leaving the administration to take a position in the private sector," White House communications director Steven Cheung said on X. He said Keith Sonderling, current deputy labour secretary, would become acting labour secretary. AP

3 desis under investigation over double murder in Italy

Naomi Canton

Three Indian nationals are under investigation in Italy for the murder of two Indian Sikh men outside a gurdwara last Friday which appears to have been triggered by a feud over succession plans for the management of the gurdwara.

Two Indian nationals handed themselves in to Bergamo Provincial Command of the Carabinieri (military police), accompanied by their lawyer, on the evening of April 18, the carabinieri told **TOI**.

Prosecutor Dr Fabio Magnolo questioned the two men, who were later released, but remain under investigation for complicity in the double homicide. They are Sukhjinder Singh, known as "Kala", and Yovanpreet Singh Dhillon, according to newspaper "Corriere della Sera". They both live in Antegnate, where the main suspect lives. He has also been identified, is also an Indian national, and is still at large, the carabinieri said.

Rajinder Singh (47), from Covo, and Gurmit Singh (48), from Agnadello, both Indian nationals from Punjab, were gunned down before the gates of Gurdwara Mata Sahib Kaur Ji in Covo, Bergamo, at 11.50pm local time on April 17. The two were discussing plans for the Vaisakhi celebration — which was later cancelled — when shot dead.

The gunman got back into a car and fled, accompanied by another vehicle with other Indian men in. The autopsies are scheduled for Thursday.

Clash at gurdwara in Germany leaves 4 injured, probe on

London: Four people were injured after a clash broke out between two groups at a gurdwara in Germany's Moers city, prompting a large-scale security response, including special forces, according to German authorities and media reports.

The incident occurred around 2.20 pm local time on Sunday during prayer time at the Sikh community centre when an altercation broke out between two groups present at the site, the Wesel district police said in a press release.

While police confirmed that arrests were made, it did not confirm the cause of the altercation or the nature of the reported gunshots. According to reports, the confrontation is believed to have stemmed from disputes within members of Sikh community. PTI

WORLD DIGEST

Reuters

Children climb atop a tank, on Israel's Memorial Day, which commemorates fallen soldiers of wars, in Latrun, on Tuesday

Student from China charged with illegally taking pix of US military planes

A college student from China has been charged with illegally taking photos of US military planes in Nebraska during a multistate road trip that included a stop at an Air Force base in South Dakota. Tianrui Liang, 21, was arrested April 7 at a New York airport while trying to leave the US for Scotland, where he attends school, the FBI said in a court filing. Liang admitted that he got out of a car on a public road in late March and took photos of an RC-135, a reconnaissance aircraft, and an E-4B at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha, the FBI said. The E-4B, known as the "Nightwatch," can serve as an airborne command center for a president and military officials in times of emergency, according to the Air Force. The FBI said it's illegal to photograph or sketch defence installations without approval. Images of both planes are available online. Liang's attorney has declined to comment.

Police seek to arrest K-pop mogul behind BTS in S Korea

South Korea police said Tuesday they are seeking to arrest music mogul Bang Si-Hyuk, chairman of the agency behind K-pop supergroup BTS, as they expand an investigation into allegations that he illegally gained more than $100 million in an investor fraud scheme. The police confirmed that it has asked prosecutors to request a court warrant for Bang's arrest. Representatives of Bang's agency, HYBE, are yet to comment. Bang has been under investigation since Nov.

Hong Kong govt seeks to seize $16m from Jimmy Lai

The Hong Kong govt is attempting to seize more than HK$127 million ($16.22 million) from jailed media tycoon Jimmy Lai after the city's biggest national security case, according to a court document released on Tuesday. The writ issued by the High Court details bank accounts, several small factory properties and private company shareholdings linked to Lai, who built his fortune in the garment trade before moving into media. The seizure case is due to be heard on July 8.

Japan scraps ban on lethal weapons exports, changing its postwar pacifist policy

Tokyo: Japan on Tuesday scrapped a ban on lethal weapons exports, a major change in its postwar pacifist policy as the country seeks to build up its arms industry amid worries over Chinese and North Korean aggression. The approval by PM Sanae Takaichi's cabinet of the new guidelines clears a final set of hurdles for many arms sales, including of Japanese-developed warships, combat drones and other weapons.

It has been largely welcomed by Japanese defence partners like Australia and attracted interest from Southeast Asia and Europe. US ambassador to Japan George Glass on X called the move a "historic step" that will help enhance the defence capabilities between the allies.

China criticised the change in policy. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the global community including China will "resolutely resist Japan's reckless moves toward a new type of militarism."

The new policy will "ensure safety for Japan and further contribute to the peace and stability in the region and the international society as the security environment around our country rapidly changes," chief cabinet secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters. "Govt will strategically promote defence equipment transfers to create a security environment that is desirable for Japan and to build up the industrial base that can support fighting resilience."

Japan has long prohibited most arms exports under its post-World War II pacifist constitution. It has made recent changes because of rising global and regional tensions, but exports were limited to: rescue, transport, alerts, surveillance and minesweeping.

The new guidelines scrap those limits and allow the export of equipment such as fighter jets, missiles and destroyers. That's a major change from existing exports such as flak jackets, gas masks and civilian-use vehicles that Japan has sent to Ukraine and intelligence radars sold to the Philippines.

For now, such exports will be limited to 17 countries that have signed defence equipment and technology transfer agreements with Japan. Japan remains committed to strict screening and export controls to third countries and will not offer lethal weapons to countries at war, officials said, but granted that exceptions could be made to that limit.

Japan began to export some non-lethal military supplies in 2014. In 2023, it approved a change that would allow sales of dozens of lethal weapons and components that it manufactures under licences from other countries back to the licensors, clearing the way for Japan to sell US-designed Patriot missiles to America to make up for munitions that Washington sent to Ukraine.

The 2023 revision also paved the way for Japan to jointly develop and sell a sixth-generation fighter jet with Britain and Italy, and for Japan's biggest arms deal ever, which was formalised last week with Australia. It calls for Japan to deliver the first three of a $6.5 billion fleet of Japanese-designed frigates for the Australian navy and jointly build eight others in that country.

Japan's domestic defence industry was long seen as a bad investment. Dozens of former defence contractors have withdrawn from the market. AP

AFP/File

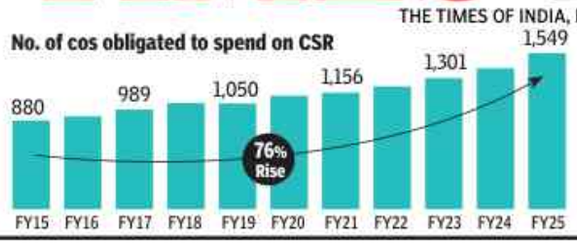
A single 'Type-88' missile is tested in Shinhidaka, on the northern island of Hokkaido. Japan's new guidelines scrap those limits and allows the export of equipment such as fighter jets and missiles

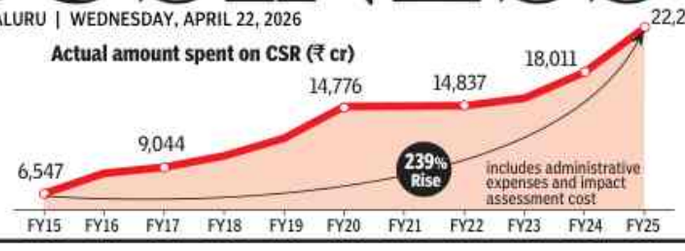
TIMES BUSINESS
THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

CSR Spending Rises 23% To Over ₹22K Cr In FY25

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spend by companies listed on NSE main board rose 23% to ₹22,212 crore in 2024-25 from ₹18,011 crore in 2023-24, according to a report. This increase in spending is seen to be on account of 22% rise in average net profit (of the preceding 3 years) of these companies, 2% of which needs to be spent on CSR activities

Source: primeinfobase.com





Top 10 cos together **spent 34%** of the total spend on CSR

934 cos increased their spending from the previous year

438 cos spent as much as prescribed, 751 exceeded their prescribed spending

28 cos, despite reporting a loss, spent on CSR

315 cos missed the mandatory spending of 2% of net profit

PSU spending saw an increase of 19% from previous year. 71 PSUs spent **₹4,791 crore in 2024-25**

Nestle's profit rises 26% on highest ever domestic sales

New Delhi: Nestle India reported a 26% rise in net profit to Rs 1,114 crore on its highest ever domestic sales of Rs 6,445 crore for fourth quarter, led by premiumisation, penetration and higher ad spends. "This performance was powered by double-digit volume growth, driven by over 50% increase in advertising spends, while delivering an EBITDA margin of 26%," Manish Tiwary, CMD, Nestlé India said. Total sales and domestic sales for Q4 increased by 23% each, while all product groups contributed to the performance, he said. For FY26, total sales increased by nearly 15% to Rs 23,071 crore, while the net profit jumped nearly 7% year-on-year to Rs 3545 crore. The company declared a final dividend of Rs 5 per equity share. TNN

Krafton, Naver partner Mirae to launch ₹6k cr fund

Mumbai/Bengaluru: South Korean firms Krafton and Naver Corporation will set up a Rs 6,000 crore fund to invest in Indian tech companies. The fund, to be managed by Mirae Asset Venture Investments, will primarily invest in growth-stage firms. "The fund is one of the largest India-focused capital pools ever raised by an Asian technology-led platform," the companies said in a joint statement on Tuesday. The launch was formalised alongside the three-day official visit of South Korean President Lee Jae Myung to India. The fund will back companies building technology platforms such as digital marketplaces and platform infrastructure. TNN

HDFC Life extends CEO Padalkar's term

Mumbai: HDFC Life Insurance has approved the re-appointment of Vibha Padalkar as managing director and CEO for five years from Sept 12, 2026, subject to shareholder and regulatory approvals. Padalkar, who joined the company in 2008, has led its listing and a landmark M&A transaction in the life insurance sector. TNN

Gold, silver rise amid mixed global cues

New Delhi: Silver prices rose Rs 700 to Rs 2.6 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Tuesday while gold also edged higher amid geopolitical uncertainty and mixed global cues. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9% purity gained Rs 300 to about Rs 1.57 lakh per 10 grams, inclusive of all taxes. AGENCIES

Robust health: Life insurance industry new biz grows 15.7%

Total Premiums Climb To ₹4.6L Cr From About ₹4L Cr In FY25

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The life insurance industry recorded a 15.7% expansion in new business premiums during FY26, as the sector navigated a landscape defined by diverging growth strategies across individual and group segments. Total premiums across the industry climbed to Rs 4.6 lakh crore from close to Rs 4 lakh crore in FY25. This momentum highlights a robust recovery and deepening penetration in the domestic market after the volatility of recent years.

The number of policies sold during the same period increased by only 4.7% to 2.8 crore from 2.7 crore in FY25. Market share dynamics shifted in favour of private players, with SBI Life leading the gains through a 0.3% increase in its total share. Aditya Birla Sun Life and Kotak Mahindra Life followed with increases of 0.2% each. Conversely, HDFC Life experienced the most significant contraction, losing 0.5% of its market share. LIC also recorded a decline of 0.4% in its total market presence during this period.

Growth in the individual non-single premium segment was spearheaded by SBI Life, which saw an absolute increase of Rs 2,445.6 crore or 19.6% over the year. Axis Max Life and Tata AIA Life also demonstrated strength in this category, recording 19% increases of Rs 1,532 crore and Rs 1,504.7 crore respectively. The group insurance segment acted as a vital stabiliser for several insurers whose individual portfolios remained stagnant.

CreditAccess Life achieved a total growth of Rs 432.6 crore entirely through group business, as its individual segment growth stood at zero. PNB MetLife, on the other hand, recorded a total increase of Rs 670.7 crore, supported by an Rs 886.5 crore rise in group insurance that offset a Rs 215.8 crore decline in its individual business.

LIC maintained its position as the largest market participant with a total premium exceeding Rs 2.6 lakh crore. Its operations remain heavily weighted towards the group segment, which contributed Rs 1.9 lakh crore, or around 74% of its total new business premium in FY26. While its overall share dipped, the sheer scale of its group operations remains a significant factor in the industry.

Private competitors demonstrated varying degrees of segment concentration. SBI Life drew roughly 70% of its total, amounting to Rs 29,782 crore, from individual business. Axis Max Life showed even higher concentration, with the individual segment comprising over 85% of its total premium at about Rs 12,377 crore. HDFC Life and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, meanwhile, pursued distinct structural paths within their respective portfolios.

SBI LIFE LEADS GAINS

- Market share dynamics shift in favour of private players, with **SBI Life leading the gains through a 0.3% increase** in total share
- **Aditya Birla Sun Life and Kotak Mahindra Life** followed with increases of **0.2%** each
- **HDFC Life** experienced the most significant contraction, losing **0.5%** of its market share
- **LIC maintained its position as the largest market participant** with a total premium exceeding ₹2.6 lakh crore

Sensex up 753 pts to 6-week high

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Elevated tensions and uncertain participation make any negative surprise a key downside risk

Mumbai: With Brent crude sliding below the $90/barrel mark and WTI close to $85 on the back of the likely second round of peace talks between US and Iran, sensex rallied 753 points (1%) on Tuesday to close over the 79K mark, a level not seen for over six weeks. Market players, however, are cautious on the outcome of the ongoing diplomatic efforts.

On Tuesday, sensex opened about 100 points higher, picked up gains through the session to an intra-day high at 79,367 points and closed just a tad off that high mark, at 79,273 points. Banking & financial services, and FMCG stocks led the day's rally with HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank contributing the most to the index's gain.

On the NSE, Nifty too showed a similar trend and closed 212 points (0.9%) up at 24,577 points.

According to Siddhartha Khemka of Motilal Oswal Financial Services, the current trend of gradual up move for the leading indices is expected to continue, backed by improving macros, easing crude, and strong Q4 earnings momentum from India Inc.

"With the ceasefire deadline arriving (Wednesday evening), all eyes turn to the second round of US–Iran talks — while markets remain hopeful of progress, elevated tensions and uncertain participation make any negative surprise a key downside risk."

Khemka also warned that the flow of foreign funds remains equally important for the Indian market, with Monday's selling after three consecutive days of buying a reminder that foreign flow reversal is not yet a done deal. Tuesday's gains came despite a Rs 1,919-crore net selling by foreign funds, BSE data showed. On the other hand, domestic funds were net buyers at Rs 2,221 crore net inflow.

RBI's proposal to make digi transactions simpler, safer

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: RBI has come out with a Digital Payments – E-mandate Framework, 2026 which seeks to make recurring digital payments simpler, safer and more user-centric by reducing friction while retaining safeguards, marking a shift towards a consent-driven autopay ecosystem.

The guidelines mandate a 24-hour pre-debit notification, requiring issuers to inform users in advance about the merchant name, transaction amount, timing and reason for the debit. This advance intimation provides customers a window to review and, if necessary, stop an upcoming transaction before funds are deducted.

Under the new framework, customers gain significantly greater control over their mandates, with the ability to modify, pause or cancel instructions at any time. Users can also set a maximum cap for variable recurring payments and opt out either of a specific transaction or the entire mandate, tilting the balance of power away from merchants and towards customers. To ensure security alongside flexibility, any opt-out request must be validated through an additional factor of authentication such as an OTP. This aims to prevent fraudulent cancellations while allowing legitimate users to quickly manage their mandates.

The framework also reduces friction for routine payments by removing the need for repeated authentication for transactions up to Rs 15,000. For essential financial payments such as insurance premiums, mutual fund subscriptions and credit card bill payments, the threshold for transactions without additional authentication has been raised to Rs 1 lakh.

Exporters eye refund as US opens window

Hope To Recover Some Of Discounts They Offered

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New Delhi: With the US opening a refund window, exporters are hoping to recover some of the discounts they had offered during the period, when the Trump administration levied a hefty 50% tariff on Indian goods.

In a large number of cases the discount was to the tune of 15-18% to compensate for the 30% gap between the tariff imposed on India and its rivals. Following a US court order, in case of importers on record, the US authorities will deposit the money into the bank accounts there, which in most cases will be of customs agents. But in 80-85% of the cases, it will be the buyer, who will receive the refund, and it will be up to them to refund the money to Indian exporters, said Fieo director general Ajay Sahai.

"When we had given those discounts, there was an understanding about getting it back in case there was a refund, we are discussing the issue with our buyers in the US," said Puran Dawar, a footwear exporter from Agra.

But, many are sceptical as it is the large exporters, especially those with written contracts covering the issue, that are likely to emerge as winners. "For those with a long-standing relationship, there is a possibility of some of it coming back. It is, however, subject to getting the money from the administration," said Pankaj Chadha, chairman of EEPC India.

Some exporters are also unclear about how the process will work, amid demands from certain American consumer groups that the benefit should actually accrue to the consumers.

"For India, the US decision to refund tariffs offers a potential — but uncertain — financial upside. While Indian exports were heavily affected by the now-invalidated tariffs, especially in labour-intensive sectors, any recovery will depend not on policy but on how effectively exporters negotiate with US buyers, who will receive the refunds," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said in a note.

But, many are also expecting a boost for their businesses. "It will give a lot of confidence to the retailer and the brands, and ultimately to the consumers in the US.

TARIFF TALE

- **April 2, 2025** | Trump announces 10% tariff
- **Aug 7** | Indian goods face 25% reciprocal levy
- **Aug 28** | Rises to 50% as additional duty for buying Russian oil kicks in
- **Feb 2** | India-US announce framework, tariff to be reduced to 25% and then to 18%
- **Feb 20** | US Supreme Court makes tariffs legally void, triggering refunds

Ternus 'is a strong believer in AI'

▶Continued from page 1

The hardware engineering division will be taken over by longtime deputy Tom Marieb, according to people with knowledge of the matter. He will report to newly named chief hardware officer Johny Srouji. In that role, Srouji is gaining oversight of a freshly combined hardware engineering and hardware technologies group.

"John Ternus has the mind of an engineer, the soul of an innovator, and the heart to lead with integrity and with honor," Cook said in the statement. "He is a visionary whose contributions to Apple over 25 years are already too numerous to count, and he is without question the right person to lead Apple into the future." The announcement comes just weeks after the company's 50th anniversary celebration — festivities that included a live performance at the Apple Park campus by Paul McCartney.

Investors largely took the announcement in stride. After dipping nearly 2% in late trading, the shares pared their losses. Apple shares have gained roughly 2,000% since Cook took the CEO job in Aug 2011. In the new executive chairman role, Cook will be engaging with policymakers around the world, Apple said. The 65-year-old CEO already oversees Apple's relationship with US President Donald Trump and often travels to China to manage the company's ties with that country.

During the Cook era, the company introduced larger iPhones, multiple new iPads, and services like Apple Music and Apple TV. But there have also been flops, including the Vision Pro headset and a failed attempt to build a self-driving car. The company spent a decade working on both.

Ternus is a strong believer in AI and reorganised the hardware engineering division this month to operate with a new AI platform designed to help with product development and improving device quality, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The incoming CEO has been leading the charge on a trio of new AI-focused wearables and new home devices, Bloomberg has reported. That lineup includes new AirPods, smart glasses and a pendant with cameras. Cook has been preparing Ternus for the role for months, asking him at the end of last year to informally take over the company's software and hardware design teams. He has also inherited a new hardware prototyping team in recent months and took charge of hardware engineering for the Apple watch.

'Tern' Of Fate For Apple's AI Strategy?

The co's CEO transition comes at a critical time as investors are fretting over its lack of innovation in a rapidly evolving AI world and Apple lost its top spot as 'most-valuable company' to AI chipmaker Nvidia

APPLE M-CAP & KEY MILESTONES IN COOK'S TENURE

Tim Cook: A Man of Systems

- Built Apple's indispensable China-centric supply chain, driving scale and margins
- Expanded into payments, video & music screening & wearables, and launched Apple Watch & AirPods
- Leaned on incremental upgrades more than breakthrough products
- Missed the AI wave beyond early Siri

LEGACY IN NUMBERS

MARKET CAP: $350 bn (2011) → $4tn (2026)

STOCK: 2011 $13 → 2026 $266 (~20X RISE)

200 stores, 2.5+ bn active devices

Source: Bloomberg, Company Financials

John Ternus: Hardware Chief

- Joined product development in 2001, led hardware since 2021
- Led M-series Mac transition, shaped development of iPad & AirPods
- Will focus on developing new AI hardware and wearables, including a foldable phone, AirPods, smart glasses, pendant camera
- Promoted to CEO at 50, same age Cook was when he took over

HCL revenue dips 3.3% QoQ, flags AI deflation

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru / New Delhi: HCLTech's results presented a mixed picture, weighed down by client-specific headwinds, delayed procurement decisions and persistent market volatility, even as the company continued to lean into artificial intelligence as a long-term growth driver.

Revenue for the March quarter declined 3.3% sequentially in constant currency (which excludes currency impact) and grew 2.4% year-on-year. In dollar terms, revenue stood at $3.6 billion, down 2.9% quarter-on-quarter but up 5.3% year-on-year. For FY26, HCLTech reported a 3.9% rise in revenue in constant currency. In dollar terms, revenue grew 6% to $14.6 billion. CEO C Vijayakumar contextualised the performance against a challenging macroeconomic backdrop, noting that tariff-related volatility persisted while discretionary spending weakened across traditional service lines.

"Our services performance this quarter came in at a lower end of our expectations. This was primarily driven by a reduction in discretionary spending in telecom as well as the discontinuation of two SAP programmes which happened later in the quarter. While annuity programmes in telecom held steady, we saw select clients scale back discretionary investments across both digital business and engineering services during the quarter. Some of this impact is likely to carry into the next quarter, and we have factored that into the guidance that we will be providing," he said at the earnings press conference on Tuesday.

Beyond the quarterly softness, the company flagged a deeper structural shift driven by what it termed "AI-led deflation," estimating a 2–3% annual impact on existing revenue streams. As automation and AI adoption rise, traditional deal sizes are shrinking even as demand remains intact.

To offset this, HCLTech is scaling its "advanced AI" portfolio, which has reached an annualised revenue run rate of $620 million. Management expects AI-native services to grow at 25–30% in the near term, while AI-amplified segments such as data, cloud and cybersecurity could deliver double-digit growth.

Still, the near-term environment remains challenging. The March quarter was impacted by delays in client decision-making, particularly toward the end of the quarter, alongside reduced discretionary spending in telecom and the discontinuation of select programmes. Management also highlighted broader macro pressures, including tariff volatility, elevated energy costs in Europe and supply chain disruptions, all of which are shaping cautious client behaviour. Two client-specific headwinds in the Americas are expected to shave about 50 basis points off FY27 growth. This uncertainty is reflected in the wider-than-usual guidance band of 1–4% revenue growth for FY27.

Margins also came under pressure. EBIT margin contracted nearly 200 basis points sequentially to 16.5% in the March quarter from 18.6% in the December quarter. The margin includes restructuring costs—65 basis points for FY26 and 122 basis points in the March quarter—while excluding a one-time $109 million impact related to new labour codes. For the full year, EBIT margin declined to 17.2% from 18.3% a year earlier.

Net income for the March quarter stood at Rs 4,488 crore, down 6.4% sequentially but up 4.2% year-on-year. On the workforce front, HCLTech ended FY26 with a total headcount of 2.2 lakh reflecting a net addition of 3,761 employees during the year, including 11,744 freshers. Attrition improved to 12.5% from 13% a year earlier. During the March quarter, the company added 802 employees, including 1,712 freshers.

Q4 SERVICES BIZ TEPID

"Our services performance this quarter came in at a lower end of our expectations. This was primarily driven by a reduction in discretionary spending in telecom as well as the discontinuation of two SAP programmes which happened later in the quarter.

C Vijayakumar | CEO & MD, HCLTECH

Company	*FY26 over FY25 revenue growth CC	* Q4 revenue growth YoY CC	* Operating margin FY26	TCV FY26 ($/bn)	Net addition FY26
TCS	2.4	-0.6	25	40.7	-23,460
Wipro	-1.6	-0.2	17.2	16.4	8,810
HCLTech	3.9	2.4	17.2	9.3	3,761

Persistent Systems Q4 profit up 33.7%

New Delhi: Mid-tier IT services company Persistent Systems on Tuesday reported a 33.7% growth in consolidated net profit to Rs 529.3 crore in the Jan-March quarter of FY26. It had posted a net profit of Rs 395.8 crore in the same period last fiscal, according to regulatory filings. The company's revenue from operations increased about 25% to Rs 4,055.9 crore in Q4 FY26, compared with Rs 3,242.1 crore in Q4 FY25. Sequentially, profit and revenue rose 20.4% and 7.4%, respectively, over the previous quarter (Oct-Dec). In FY26, Persistent's profit climbed 33.2% to Rs 1,865.1 crore from Rs 1,400.2 crore in FY25. "As AI adoption accelerates, our AI-first strategy is strengthening our operating model and improving the quality and scale of delivery across the business," said Sandeep Kalra, CEO, Persistent Systems. PTI

Databricks' India employee base to cross 1k

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Bengaluru: US data and AI company Databricks is sharpening its focus on cybersecurity as the next frontier in data and AI, with India playing a central role in its global strategy, including contributions to its newly launched LakeWatch platform.

"Cyber threats today are largely human-driven, but as AI agents evolve, that will change," said its India country manager Kamalkanth Tummala. "We want to build systems where agents themselves can monitor risks, detect threats, and secure data environments." Still in its early stages, LakeWatch integrates security and monitoring capabilities for AI and data platforms. It enables customers to ingest, retain and analyse large volumes of multi-modal data, while reducing costs and avoiding vendor lock-in. Security teams gain enterprise-wide visibility and can deploy automated defence agents to detect and respond to threats at scale.

Alongside this push, Databricks is significantly expanding its presence in India, backed by a $250 million investment over the next three years. The capital will be deployed across R&D, talent, go-to-market (GTM) operations, and ecosystem development. "This investment is not in one area," Tummala said. "It spans offices, engineering, GTM and global delivery. India is a key part of our global strategy."

> This investment is not in one area...It spans offices, engineering, GTM and global delivery. India is a key part of our global strategy
>
> **Kamalkanth Tummala**
> DATABRICKS, INDIA COUNTRY MANAGER

The company currently operates out of Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai and Pune, with Bengaluru as its primary hub. Its India workforce has crossed 750 employees and is expected to exceed 1,000 by year-end, with hiring focused largely on engineering roles, followed by GTM expansion. Nearly 70% of the India workforce is aligned to R&D, underscoring the country's role as a core product development hub. Teams are working on areas such as data ingestion, platform enhancements and components of Genie, the company's AI assistant designed to improve enterprise decision-making.

"India is not just a support centre—it's a product development hub," Tummala said. The company is also seeing strong momentum across customer segments. Startups in India are increasingly being built as "data- and AI-first," while large enterprises are accelerating modernisation efforts. At the same time, global capability centres (GCCs) are evolving into strategic hubs. To cater to varied enterprise needs, Databricks is positioning itself as an open AI platform. Its AI gateway allows customers to access multiple large language models without being tied to a single provider. The company closed a $5 billion funding round at a $134 billion valuation.

TECH **I'D LIKE** TO SEE

AN AUTONOMOUS GLOBAL TRADE MESH

I envision an autonomous global trade mesh, a living, AI-powered network where every shipment, port, regulation, and market are part of a self-aware ecosystem. Imagine goods embedded with nano-sensors streaming real-time quality, sustainability, and compliance data into a decentralised AI grid. This system would not just automate customs clearance or tariff negotiations, it would also anticipate disruptions, reroute shipments mid-journey, and even trigger production in response to emerging demand. Powered by quantum computing, blockchain, and ethical governance protocols, this mesh would make trade faster, fairer, and more inclusive, allowing the smallest artisan and the largest exporter to compete on equal terms in a transparent, trusted global marketplace.

Sunil Kharbanda | CO-FOUNDER & COO, TREZIX

iToons — Ajit Ninan & Sunil Agarwal

AI VS AI: THE RULES OF cybersecurity are being rewritten

It is also creating a new generation of high-skill cybersecurity jobs

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The life of a cybersecurity executive has been upended by the arrival of a new class of artificial intelligence systems that can sift through vast swathes of software and surface weaknesses at a speed no human team can match. Sharda Tickoo, country manager for India & SAARC at TrendAI (formerly Trend Micro), says she has spent the past fortnight incessantly talking to clients, partners and stakeholders – fielding alarm, explaining context, and mapping out a path forward. "It is now established that AI has crossed a threshold where it can discover vulnerabilities at a level comparable with top human researchers, but at a speed and scale humans simply cannot match," she says. "The same capability can defend or be weaponised."

The catalyst for this collective anxiety is Mythos, a frontier AI model developed by Anthropic that has demonstrated a remarkable – and deeply unsettling – ability to surface zero-day vulnerabilities across major operating systems and web browsers. Its emergence has prompted crisis talks among regulators worldwide, and inside the industry, it has accelerated a reckoning that many say was long overdue.

Diwakar Dayal, MD and area VP for India & Saarc at SentinelOne, has lived through every major technology wave of the past three decades – the birth of the internet, the cloud era, the mobile revolution. He is unequivocal that this one is different. "Every previous wave took years to unfold. This one is almost on steroids," he says. "Unless you respond to AI-driven attacks with AI-driven defence, it is an impossible battle." For Dayal, the starkest illustration of the shift is the shrinking gap between vulnerability discovery and exploitation. "Fifteen years back, the gap was maybe two years. Then it became months. Now it is hours," he says. "You cannot patch everything. That game is already lost."

That compression has rendered traditional security practices inadequate at a structural level. For years, the industry's backbone was the patch cycle – find the flaw, fix the flaw. But as Tickoo notes, the backlog of unpatched vulnerabilities was already enormous before Mythos arrived. "Enterprises are still struggling to patch n-minus-ten vulnerabilities (security flaws present in software versions that are ten releases behind the current, most up-to-date version)," she says. "Mythos has not created new vulnerabilities so much as revealed what was already there. It simply compresses the timeline of exploitation."

> For the cybersecurity industry, we have reached a definitive "inflection point." Our work with Anthropic's Claude Mythos Preview through Project Glasswing alongside a select coalition of partners confirmed a stark new reality: frontier AI models can now accomplish a year's worth of penetration testing in less than three weeks.
> – **Philippa Cogswell** | MANAGING PARTNER, JAPAC, PALO ALTO NETWORKS UNIT 42

> The cybersecurity workforce will not shrink, it will evolve. As AI automates repetitive tasks, professionals will need to understand AI infrastructure, models, and new attack vectors like prompt injection. This shift will create more specialised roles, requiring deeper technical skills, making cybersecurity a far more advanced and intellectually demanding career path than before.
> – **Sharda Tickoo** | COUNTRY MANAGER, INDIA & SAARC, TRENDAI

> If anyone is looking for a career, the future is in cyber. This industry can absorb a lot more people. But the expectation has changed — we don't need basic skills anymore. We need professionals who understand AI, networks, applications and complexity at a much deeper level. That is where the real opportunity lies.
> – **Diwakar Dayal** | MD & AREA VP, INDIA & SAARC, SENTINELONE

> Models like Mythos signal a turning point for cybersecurity. Threats are no longer limited to human-led attacks. AI can now identify weaknesses, map pathways, and potentially exploit them at a scale and speed that compress the window between vulnerability discovery and real-world impact. That is why regulators and financial institutions are treating this as a systemic risk issue, not a narrow technology concern.
> – **Balaji Rao** | AREA VP, INDIA & SAARC, COMMVAULT

> What we are doing right now is accelerating our engagements with BFSI institutions, defence establishments, and critical infrastructure operators across India and globally to ensure that our quantum-safe architecture is deployed before adversaries, state or non-state, gain access to Mythos-class tools. The storm, as has been said, is not coming. The storm is here. We are already inside it.
> – **Sunil Gupta** | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, QNU LABS

AI Native Defence

The industry's response is coalescing around a single principle: security must become AI-native, not merely AI-assisted. Tickoo is emphatic on the distinction. "Traditional tools were built for human-led detection. That model does not hold when AI can uncover thousands of vulnerabilities across systems," she says. At TrendAI, that means integrating Claude models directly into its platform to drive what she calls "agentic autonomous security operations" – systems that learn continuously, prioritise intelligently, and act without waiting for human instruction. The company's Zero Day Initiative programme, long a researcher-driven effort to surface vulnerabilities, is itself being made more automatic and agentic. Dayal echoes this at SentinelOne, where the company's endpoint security platform operates in real time, detecting and containing threats at machine speed irrespective of whether a patch exists. "If you use traditional methods," he says simply, "it is not possible."

For the time being practices like virtual patching – placing a protective wrapper around a known vulnerability to block exploitation without requiring a restart or downtime – have become a critical stopgap in this environment. Tickoo explains that while it has always existed, it is now becoming non-negotiable. "You will not be able to patch everything because it requires downtime," she says. "Virtual patching acts as a compensating control. Technically, the vulnerability is still there inside the asset, but the moment anyone tries to exploit it, it will be blocked."

Satykam Acharya, co-founder and director of offensive practices at Infopercept, argues that the real challenge is not simply discovery but prioritisation. "Most breaches are not caused by complex zero-days," he says. "They come from misconfigurations, weak identity controls, or exposed credentials. In many cases, attackers are no longer hacking in – they are simply logging in." His firm's approach focuses on helping clients answer three questions: which vulnerabilities are actually exploitable, which create real business risk, and what to fix first.

Philippa Cogswell, managing partner for JAPAC at Palo Alto Networks Unit 42, describes the present moment as a "definitive inflection point", noting that Palo Alto's own tests with Mythos showed how the AI system completed a year's worth of penetration testing in under three weeks. "Defending against an attacker who can do in minutes what a team does in weeks requires a completely different approach," she says. "This is why we are seeing a move towards platformisation, where security data is consolidated so AI can detect, prioritise and respond to threats in real time."

Balaji Rao, Area VP for India & SAARC at Commvault, says detection and prevention remain essential, but they are no longer enough when attack chains can move at machine speed. He says that Commvault, which specialises in data protection and cyber recovery for enterprises, has adopted a "ResOps" approach, where recovery systems are continuously validated rather than periodically reviewed.

Sunil Gupta, co-founder and CEO of QNu Labs, takes the most unsparing view: "Mythos is not a warning. It is a verdict on the past decade of cybersecurity complacency." He advocates for quantum-safe architectures as the only route beyond what he calls "a continuous, expensive, losing cycle" of patching.

Job Opportunities Galore

For all the turbulence, there is one note of striking optimism: this is, by most accounts, an extraordinary moment to build a career in cybersecurity. "If anyone is looking for a career, the future is in cyber," says Dayal. "This industry can absorb a lot more people." But the bar has risen sharply. The next generation of professionals will need fluency not just in networks and systems, but in AI infrastructure, model security, prompt injection attacks, and the architecture of agentic systems. "We don't need people with basic knowledge anymore," Dayal says. "We need people who can understand complexity at a much deeper level." Tickoo agrees: "It will become more specialised – and there will be a reskilling from a cybersecurity standpoint."

RETHINKING THE DIGITAL CORE: AI is testing the limits of legacy systems

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Traditional enterprise platforms that powered the last three decades of digital transformation are now facing a defining moment. As AI shifts businesses from transaction processing to decision-making systems, companies are grappling with whether their ERP and CRM backbones are becoming constraints, or can still serve as foundations for the AI era.

Rakesh Ravuri, CTO at digital transformation company Publicis Sapient, frames the transition starkly. "The traditional platforms have taken the world to a digitalisation era, but now, the world is moving into decisioning systems and expert systems," he says. Traditional systems were built to encode rules and ensure repeatability. "But now, that repeatability is becoming a constraint. You want your businesses to adapt, not just repeat what it has been doing."

He compares this with how client-server middleware – like WebLogic, ATG Web Commerce and WCS – became constraints in the cloud world that demanded a move to containers, Kubernetes, and serverless computing for scalability and speed.

The limitation today shows up most clearly in customer-facing scenarios. "Your traditional rules-based system will say, you can't change the ticket, but when a human talks to you, they understand your problem and say yes, let me see what I can do," Ravuri says. With AI, it is becoming possible to replicate that flexibility at scale.

Yet, the story is not one of replacement, but coexistence – at least for now. Sheenam Ohrie, MD at Broadridge Financial Solutions India, says without their core engines, including mainframes, the global fintech would not be anywhere. They are what allow Broadridge to process 10 trillion worth of transactions every day, and process over 10 billion communications annually. "Mainframes are not going anywhere in the near future," she says. Instead, companies are layering AI capabilities on top of these systems. Broadridge's "Distribution GPT" personalises investor communications while relying on legacy infrastructure for execution. "The core is extremely important, but enabling customer experiences and personalisations, you need the AI layer around," Ohrie says.

Anjan Mazumdar, engineering director for catalog, merchandising and marketplace at UK-based retailer Tesco, agrees. The core platforms, he says, have over time become masters of the enterprise's domain data, have mastered transactions. "What we need is an intelligence layer around that," he says. "Take the data, understand the context, surface the intelligence at the right time."

Mazumdar says baking intelligence into legacy systems is difficult, so, for now, you need a separate intelligence layer that works with the core data.

Lakshminarasimman Raghavan, group VP of technology at Publicis Sapient, argues that legacy systems evolve too slowly for AI-first ambitions. "They are evolving at a pace which may not be in sync with the pace at which you want to evolve for your customers," he says. As businesses chase hyper-personalisation and real-time decisions, this gap is becoming critical.

So, while it may be necessary eventually to redo the heart of the system, the near term focus, Raghavan says, will be to build context from data in existing core systems and build intelligence around it.

This is driving a shift in how enterprises think about platforms. Instead of focusing on buying monolithic systems, companies are building differentiated capabilities on top. "Enterprises need to be very deliberate, on where to build, what to rent, what to buy," Mazumdar says, adding that "your real moat is the orchestration layer."

Easing Integration

AI is accelerating this transition by fundamentally changing integration. Historically, connecting systems required rigid contracts and painstaking engineering. Now, Ravuri says, AI is enabling intent-driven integration, which is less brittle than hard-coded automations that break when the system changes. "AI models are able to intuitively understand, oh, you wanted to post an order to this system, let me see what the interfaces are to post an order… I see these two interfaces which I can use. Or this interface requires an order in this format… I have this other format… I can convert it."

But while AI simplifies certain tasks, it introduces new layers of complexity. Ohrie warns that "simplicity comes at the cost of very complex architecture." Systems must now manage data flows, personalisation, monitoring and security simultaneously. "The entire architecture needs to evolve," she says.

More than AI models, it's orchestration & application that matter

> Traditional enterprise systems captured business rules and made them repeatable, but now that repeatability with learning & context awareness is becoming a constraint. With AI, businesses can adapt based on current context, not just repeat what they have been doing. And that's taking them towards agentic transformation.
> **Rakesh Ravuri** | CTO AND SVP - ENGINEERING, PUBLICIS SAPIENT

> The value is not in the core system or the AI model alone, it is in the business process orchestration. How you convert your data and domain knowledge into experiences and personalise outcomes is what will differentiate one enterprise from another.
> **Sheenam Ohrie** | MANAGING DIRECTOR, BROADRIDGE FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS INDIA

> AI models drive intelligence, but they are now commodity software. The application layer is the force multiplier. How you use that intelligence in your business context and build capabilities on top of it is what creates differentiation. In retail, how do you use it to drive catalog transformation, taxonomy, range, fulfilment, marketing, supplier briefings!
> **Anjan Mazumdar** | ENGINEERING DIRECTOR - CATALOG, MERCHANDISING AND MARKETPLACE, TESCO

> AI makes integration more natural because it works with intent rather than rigid contracts. But to make that consistent across systems, you need a strong enterprise architecture function that governs how capabilities are discovered and used.
> **Lakshminarasimman (Narasimman) Raghavan** | GVP - TECHNOLOGY, PUBLICIS SAPIENT

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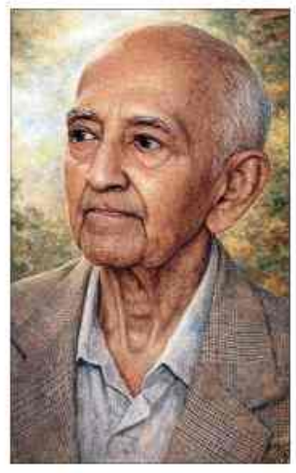
The man who knew AI needed biological inspiration

Srinivasan Ramani

BIRTH CENTENARY OF A LEGEND



Rangaswamy Narasimhan
April 17, 1926 – Sept. 3, 2007

Narasimhan was a computer and cognitive scientist, regarded by many as the father of computer science research in India. He led the team that developed TIFRAC (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Automatic Calculator), the first Indian indigenous computer, and was instrumental in the establishment in 1975 of CMC Ltd, an Indian govt company, later bought by Tata Consultancy Services. He was awarded Padma Shri in 1977.

Much has been written about Prof R Narasimhan (RN) – computer pioneer, institution builder, and one of the sharpest minds of his generation. Anyone looking for dates, milestones, and achievements will find the Wikipedia article useful.

This piece is not about that RN!

This is about the RN I knew as a person – my mentor, my PhD co-guide (along with Prof J R Isaac), and a remarkable human being whose influence shaped my early academic life.

Lunches, Conversations, And A Curious Mind

RN was a true gentleman, and a natural magnet for researchers from wildly different fields. Most afternoons, you could find him in the TIFR (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research) West Canteen, talking to computer scientists and biologists, and an occasional psychologist, radio astronomer, or nuclear engineer at a six-seater table. I was lucky to be part of that circle.

These were not casual lunch-table chats. RN was deeply fascinated by cognitive psychology and brain sciences. He believed – long before it became fashionable – that artificial intelligence must learn from animal and human behaviour and the functioning of the brain.

Because of this, our table had biologists more often than physicists. Many of them were studying C. elegans, the tiny millimetre-long worm with just 302 neurons that still manages to learn and remember. RN loved that fact. It fit perfectly with his conviction that understanding simple biological systems could illuminate the future of AI.

My friend Ramesh Sinha from radio astronomy would join us sometimes. And occasionally, M R Srinivasan – founder-chairman of the Nuclear Power Corporation – would walk from his office across the street and sit with us. He was RN's friend.

Bananas, Cheese, And A Life Of Simplicity

RN had a small ritual at the end of lunch. He would buy two bananas and a cube of cheese from the canteen, wrap them carefully in paper napkins, and take them home. That was his dinner.

Srinivasan Ramani is the first inductee from India into the Internet Hall of Fame. He was founder director of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Mumbai, and played a key role in India's Education and Research Network (ERNET)

There was something touching about that simplicity. "High thinking, modest living" was not a slogan for him – it was his way of life.

NCST Days And Guest House Stories

Later, when many of us from the TIFR computer group moved out to create the National Centre for Software Technology (NCST), RN became a key member of our governing council. After retiring from TIFR, he moved to Bengaluru, but continued to visit NCST and stay in our guest house.

The guest house had two rooms. On rare occasions, RN had to share it with another governing council member – an eminent computer scientist I will call Prof 2. I lived on the same floor, so I often heard the stories.

RN had a strong dislike for house lizards. If he spotted one, he would immediately call the building watchman to come and chase it out. The guest house had a common bathroom, and Prof 2 once told me that RN politely asked if he could take his shower first. "I don't like a wet bathroom," he said.

These small moments captured the man perfectly – brilliant, disciplined, gentle, and quietly particular about the things that mattered to him.

Looking Back From Today's AI World

When I think back to those lunches and conversations about brains, behaviour, memory, and learning, I feel a quiet pride. RN's focus and judgement were decades ahead of its time. Today's AI revolution is based on artificial neural networks – ideas that echo the very biological inspirations RN had urged us to pay attention to.

PS: I had written the first version of this article but had asked MS Copilot if it would help in improving the long sentences and passive sentences. Copilot did that but had the gumption to offer to create a "polished, blog-ready, informal version of my article – warm, readable, and faithful to my voice". It offered to keep it "conversational, reflective, and lightly narrative, the way a personal centenary tribute should feel".

I said "go ahead. Here is my article," and gave it the text of my article. What you see above is the version Copilot produced! Then, I asked it to produce a painting-like image from a photograph of RN. I had that image two minutes later! I have reproduced it here.

I wish RN were here to see the levels AI has reached!

ZERO-DAY VULNERABILITY CTRL+F(IND)

A zero-day vulnerability is a hidden weakness in software that developers are unaware of. Because it is unknown, there is no patch or fix available when attackers first discover and exploit it. The term "zero-day" reflects that developers have had zero days to respond. Cybercriminals can use these flaws to gain access to systems, steal sensitive information, install malicious software, or disrupt services. Such attacks are particularly dangerous because they can go unnoticed until damage is already done. Once the issue becomes known, software companies work quickly to release updates to fix it. Until then, users remain vulnerable. Keeping systems updated, using security tools, and practising caution online can help reduce the risks posed by zero-day threats.

"I KNEW I WOULD DO WELL WHENEVER I GOT A CHANCE. I WAS WORKING ON MY YORKER, ON MY SWING. I WAS WAITING. I HAD SEEN THE BATSMEN BEFORE, HOW THEY PLAYED. WHEN I WENT IN, I DID WHAT THE WICKET DEMANDED."
—Ashwani Kumar | Mumbai Indians pacer

ABHISHEK RUNS RIOT, AGAIN

Opener Slams Second IPL Ton As SRH Defeat Capitals By 47 Runs

Shiva.Gundra@timesofindia.com

Rama Moorthy P

Hyderabad: Explosive opener Abhishek Sharma blasted his second IPL century, an unbeaten 135 (68b; 10x4, 10x6), while Eshan Malinga (4/32) produced another impressive performance as Sunrisers Hyderabad crushed Delhi Capitals by 47 runs to record their third straight win and fourth overall in the Indian Premier League on Tuesday.

Abhishek was at his destructive best, powering the hosts to 242/2, their fifth total of 200 or more this season. He added 97 for the opening wicket with Travis Head (37; 26b, 2x4, 2x6), 79 for the second wicket with Ishan Kishan (25; 13b, 2x4, 1x6) and an unbroken 66 for the third with Heinrich Klaasen (37*; 13b, 3x4, 3x6). The hosts then restricted Capitals to 195/9.

Dilshan Madushanka struck on debut to dismiss Pathum Nissanka (6) in his second over. KL Rahul, dropped on 14 by Malinga in his follow-through, and Nitish Rana took Capitals to 59/1 in the powerplay.

Rana then hit Shivang Kumar for 19 runs in the eighth over to reach his half-century in 27 deliveries. But Sakib Hussain ended the 86-run second-wicket stand by removing Rahul (37; 23b, 2x4, 3x6) as the visitors reached 107/2 at the halfway stage.

Malinga then turned the game with back-to-back wickets. He first removed Rana (57; 30b, 7x4, 3x6), caught at long-on, and then bowled the dangerous David Miller for nought to reduce the visitors to 107/4.

Sameer Rizvi (41; 28b, 2x4, 2x6) and Tristan Stubbs (27; 16b, 3x4, 1x6) added 59 for the fifth wicket but Malinga struck again. He dismissed Stubbs in the 16th over and Ashutosh Sharma in the 18th. Harsh Dubey (3/12) capped a perfect evening for the hosts by striking thrice in the final over.

Earlier, asked to bat, Abhishek and Head took SRH to 67/0 in the powerplay. Abhishek survived a run-out chance going for a risky second run as KL Rahul failed to gather the ball cleanly and reached his half-century in 25 balls. He celebrated it with another straight six off Axar, but Head holed out in the same over.

Kishan took on Kuldeep Yadav for two boundaries and a six as 22 came off the over. Abhishek got another reprieve when Rana dropped him on 86 at deep backward point in the 14th over off T Natarajan. He made Capitals pay by hitting Rana for consecutive sixes on the way to a century off 47 balls.

135 **Abhishek Sharma** recorded his second hundred in the IPL. His highest is 141 vs Punjab Kings in Hyderabad on April 12, 2025. He is the first batter to post two innings of 135+ in the IPL.

SCOREBOARD

SRH: A Sharma not out 135, T Head c Rizvi b Patel 37, I Kishan run out 25, H Klaasen not out 37; **Extras: (w8) 8; Total:(2 wkts, 20 overs) 242; FoW:** 1-97, 2-176; **Bowling:** Mukesh 4-0-53-0, Rana 4-0-55-0, Ngidi 4-0-41-0, Axar 2-0-23-1, Kuldeep 2-0-30-0, Natarajan 4-0-40-0.
DC: P Nissanka c sub b Madushanka 8, KL Rahul c Abhishek b Hussain 37, N Rana c Abhishek b Malinga 57, S Rizvi c Madushanka b Dubey 41, D Miller b Malinga 0, T Stubbs c Hussain b Malinga 27, A Sharma c Verma b Malinga 14, A Patel c Reddy b Dubey 2, K Yadav not out 1, L Ngidi c Madushanka b Dubey 0; **Extras: (lb1, w7) 8; Total: (9 wkts in 20 overs) 195; FoW:** 1-21, 2-107, 3-107, 4-107, 5-165, 6-186, 7-192, 8-195, 9-195; **Bowling:** Madushanka 4-0-36-1, Reddy 4-0-57-0, Malinga 4-0-32-4, Hussain 4-0-29-1, Shivang 2-0-28-0, H Dubey 2-0-12-3.
Result: SRH won by 47 runs

3 Abhishek Sharma is the third Sunrisers' batter to hit two IPL hundreds, joining David Warner and Heinrich Klaasen.

9 With his ninth hundred in 184 innings, Abhishek has emulated an Indian record for most tons in T20s, held by Virat Kohli — 9 in 403 innings. The top-three batters with most tons in T20s are Chris Gayle (22), Babar Azam (12) and David Warner (10).

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Will LSG finally feel at home at the Ekana?

Fazal Khan | tnn

Lucknow: Lucknow Super Giants return to the Ekana Stadium on Wednesday needing more than a win — what they need is a course correction. LSG have lost four of their first six matches, including a 54-run defeat to Punjab Kings in their previous outing, and are still without a home win this season after two losses in Lucknow. Rajasthan Royals, meanwhile, arrive better placed, with four wins from six games and third place on the points table.

For LSG, the concern is straightforward: their top order has not given them enough. The side has too often been forced into recovery mode and on a ground where setting up the innings matters, another shaky start could leave them chasing the game early. That makes the first six overs the clearest tactical window of the contest. Asked what was wrong with their batting unit, LSG's Aiden Markram said, "It's probably just a case of maybe struggling for a bit of rhythm. It's quite strange. We laugh about it in the sense that one or two guys can struggle, it's part of the game, but when it's the full batting lineup does so... the odds of that happening normally are quite slim."

Rajasthan look better equipped in that phase. Jofra Archer has been their early enforcer, with nine wickets in his last eight T20s, and he goes up against an LSG batting group still searching for rhythm. If Archer breaks through up front, Rajasthan can immediately squeeze a middle order that has not consistently played from positions of control. Lucknow's counter lies with Prince Yadav, whose recent numbers also stand out. He has been one of LSG's few bright spots with the new ball and if he can strike in the Powerplay on Wednesday, LSG would have already done half the job.

There is also a wider context for LSG. They are yet to feel at home at the Ekana stadium after three winless games. Home cannot become a disadvantage and on a red-soil pitch, Lucknow's batter have a lot to play for.

WEATHER 36°C

82 Sanju Samson's unbeaten knock off 52 balls in Jaipur on March 24, 2024 is the highest individual score in matches involving RR and LSG.

4/41 Yuzvendra Chahal's bowling performance for RR at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, on April 10, 2022 is the only four-wicket haul in games involving these two teams.

—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NR	NRR	P
PBKS	6	5	0	1	1.420	11
RCB	6	4	2	0	1.171	8
SRH	7	4	3	0	0.820	8
RR	6	4	2	0	0.599	8
DC	6	3	3	0	-0.130	6
GT	6	3	3	0	-0.821	6
MI	6	2	4	0	0.067	4
CSK	6	2	4	0	-0.780	4
LSG	6	2	4	0	-1.173	4
KKR	7	1	5	1	-0.879	3

'Trusting your inner voice is what it's all about'

GT's Sai Kishore On Warming The Bench, Balancing Data Inputs With Instinct & Why Spin Bowlers Will Eventually Come Into Play Later On In The IPL Season...

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New Delhi: At six-feet-five-inches tall, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat Titans left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore brings a unique trajectory and relentless accuracy to the crease. Coming off a stellar IPL-2025 campaign in which he bagged 19 wickets in 15 matches for GT, Sai Kishore has been surprisingly kept on the bench in the early stages this season. Despite missing out on the playing XI, the 29-year-old remains remarkably grounded.

"Cricket is not an individual sport, it's a team sport," Sai Kishore told TOI. "You celebrate when you win the trophy. The team always comes first. Whenever the conditions are suited to play more spinners, I'll get my chance."

He knows the T20 game is heavily dictated by conditions. This season, the flatter surfaces have favoured batters but he anticipates a shift. "IPL is very dynamic. How the tournament unfolds, how the wickets are playing, all those things are crucial factors in getting the combinations right," he said. "Whenever the wickets start to deteriorate, when the heat is more, slowly but surely the spinners will come into play. Not a lot of spinners have been able to change games as of now."

For a spinner, maintaining control on flat tracks requires a delicate balance between containing runs and hunting for wickets. "My role is to provide control to the captain," Sai Kishore said. "A lot depends on the player and situation. If a batter is settled, you would want to take him off strike, be more defensive. Somebody new to the crease, you try and get his wicket."

In an era heavily driven by analytics and match-ups, Sai Kishore, who has previously captained TN in domestic cricket, believes numbers only tell half the story. "No matter what kind of data you follow, your instincts always precede," he said. "Because, at that moment, what you feel is what you're gonna do. Data is important, knowing the game is important but at the same time trusting your instincts, your inner voice is what this game is all about."

TOI Exclusive

Getty Images

SAI KISHORE'S BOWLING IN IPL

	M	Wkts	Ave	Best	4WI	SR	ER
Overall	25	32	20.34	4/33	1	13.7	8.85
In wins	15	23	16.13	4/33	1	12.2	7.89
CY 2024	5	7	19.57	4/33	1	12.8	9.13
CY 2025	15	19	20.68	3/30	0	13.4	9.24

Sai Kishore has already tasted international success, making his T20I debut during India's gold medal winning run at the 2023 Asian Games, where he claimed 3/12 in the semifinals. However, he hasn't been able to break into the Indian team again. "To be relevant as a spinner, especially in India, you have to be able to hold yourself in all three facets of the game. You have to be a brilliant fielder, you have to be decent with the bat. I just have to make my garden very beautiful. I have to keep working on my game and be ready with the skill sets," he said.

Tilak's return to form offers MI a way forward

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Ahmedabad: Southpaw Tilak Varma had made 43 runs from 32 balls in five innings prior to his maiden IPL century on Monday at the Narendra Modi Stadium. The noise surrounding his batting form was getting heavier with every passing match. Answering all those questions, the 23-year-old reinforced his value to the team with a knock that was composed and aggressive in equal measure. His 101 off 45 balls, studded with seven sixes and eight fours, took MI to 199/5, a total that proved too steep for the Gujarat Titans (GT), who lost by 99 runs.

Coming in at the crease when Titans new-ball operator Kagiso Rabada was breathing fire and cranking up the speedometer with his thunderbolts, Tilak commenced his knock by nudging around for ones and twos and playing the odd dot ball, but crucially steadying the ship along with Naman Dhir to bring a semblance of calm to the Mumbai Indians innings. His innings was composed of two parts — the first 22 balls yielded only 19 runs, without a single hit to the fence. The rest of the innings was a blur of fours and sixes, an exhibition of unstoppable power hitting.

Tilak's childhood coach, Salam Bayash reflected on the slight changes the batter has made to his game. "I told him to spend some time at the crease before going for shots and also to cut down on the reverse sweep and play straight. The pitch wasn't that easy to bat on and the Titans' attack was a good one. I'm happy with his century. He played no reverse sweeps. Almost all his shots were either straight or played square," Bayash said.

Even the opposition was left in awe. Mumbai batting coach Matthew Hayden, in particular, was left gushing. "It was visible that the pitch had cracks, it was up and down. All credit to Tilak Varma, who put in a wonderful performance from 46/3. I once spoke to a fisherman and asked him a question about longevity in his life and in his career, and he said that when there's plenty of fish around, everyone catches fish. But what he (Varma) did was that he caught fish when no one else was catching fish," the former Australian opener said.

"We all know MI are a dangerous side. They're notorious starters. As an opposition side, we knew that and we blinked. And when you blink against a world-class player like Tilak Varma, even on a wicket that's kind of spicy, that leads to your downfall. We couldn't really retract the negative momentum that was going our way because of the performance that we saw," Hayden said.

PTI

TILAK VARMA IN IPL

	M	I	NO	Runs	HS	Ave	100	50	SR	6s
Overall	60	57	12	1643	101*	36.5	1	8	147.3	81
In wins	25	22	9	654	101*	50.3	1	1	149.3	34
IPL-2026	6	6	1	144	101*	28.8	1	0	187	7

45 Balls taken by Tilak Varma for his maiden IPL hundred — 101* vs GT in Ahmedabad on April 20, 2026 — the joint-quickest by a Mumbai batter, emulating Sanath Jayasuriya's feat vs CSK in Mumbai on May 14, 2008.

1 Tilak is the first MI batter to outscore the opponent's total (Gujarat's 100) and the 8th overall to accomplish the feat in the IPL. RCB's Chris Gayle did it twice.

Dhoni keeps at CSK nets, injured Mhatre ruled out

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PTI

Mumbai: Could MS Dhoni and Will Jacks return to action in Thursday's marquee clash between MI and CSK at the Wankhede Stadium? After days of anticipation, the signs looks promising.

On Tuesday night, Dhoni trained extensively with the CSK squad at the Wankhede, keeping wickets for nearly 30 minutes and batting in the nets for a similar duration. It was a rare sight to see Dhoni behind the stumps since he seldom keeps wickets in the nets. The 44-year-old, who had been sidelined with a calf strain during the pre-season, showed no visible discomfort while striking the ball. Though he had been training with the side in Chennai as well, his extended session in Mumbai hints at a possible return.

However, in a blow for CSK, 18-year-old opener Ayush Mhatre was ruled out with a torn hamstring, with a CSK release saying his rehabilitation could take 6-12 weeks. In another development, Australian left-arm pacer Spencer Johnson has joined the CSK squad as a replacement for compatriot Nathan Ellis.

Will Jacks sweats it out

England allrounder Jacks has finally joined the MI camp after missing the first six matches. The 27-year-old trained at the Wankhede on Monday evening and again under lights on Tuesday.

GALLERY

Shafali climbs two spots

India opener Shafali Verma climbed two places to sixth in the ICC Women's T20I Batting Rankings after her half-century against South Africa in the ongoing five-match T20I series. Shafali's opening partner, Smriti Mandhana, has slipped one spot to fourth after an underwhelming showing in the two matches.

Wrestlers get foreign coaches: The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Tuesday appointed three foreign coaches and a High Performance Director to bolster the national camps, marking a return to overseas expertise after a gap of several years. Georgia's Emzarios Shako Bentinidis (freestyle), Russia's Gogi Koguashvili (Greco-Roman) and Japan's Kosei Akaishi (women's wrestling) have been roped in as specialist coaches, while American Ian Butler has been named the High Performance Director.

Narwal clinches gold: Shiva Narwal marked his return to the global stage by clinching gold in the men's 10m air pistol at the ISSF Junior World Cup, while Chirag Sharma clinched bronze, in Cairo on Tuesday. Panaah Bhugra won the silver in women's 10m air rifle. Narwal won with a score of 241.8. Chirag completed the podium with 218.9.

'I bring front-line mindset to the crease'

Jurel On Army Discipline He Inherited From His Father

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Jaipur: In a truly instinctive and athletic piece of wicketkeeping, Dhruv Jurel played his part to perfection in Cameron Green's dismissal for Rajasthan Royals against Kolkata Knight Riders Sunday. Even Sachin Tendulkar singled out his brilliant presence of mind. "Only one stump in sight, on the move, and done in the blink of an eye! Simply magnificent Dhruv Jurel," he posted on X.

Jurel was partially unsighted as Green moved forward and across, to counter Ravi Bishnoi's googly that spun viciously down the leg side. The 25-year-old gloveman reacted in a flash. Diving full-length to his left to collect the ball, tumbling and off-balance, he managed a blind, behind-the-back flick that arrowed straight into the stumps.

For Jurel, being behind the stumps offers the best possible view of the game. "It helps me understand the game better. The best seat in the house...," he told TOI. Despite his evident quality, he is yet to become India's first-choice keeper-batter in any format. But that does not dishearten him. "Competition is good and it actually keeps me sharp. The mindset is rooted in army discipline, where you don't just prepare for the battle, you train every single day to be battle-ready. Physically and mentally, I treat every practice session like match day. The process becomes more important than the results and this has been my mantra to keep myself motivated enough to go through the grind every day," he shared.

For Jurel, temperament and mental toughness are everything, qualities he readily admits he inherited from his father. "Growing up in an army environment and hearing my father's stories about being on the front has taught me a lot about bravery and discipline. I bring the same front-line mindset to the crease," the Royals' keeper mentioned.

AFP

STUMP VIEW: Dhruv Jurel

QUOTE UNQUOTE

WANTS TO BE A BANKABLE PLAYER

"The current goal now is to win the IPL trophy for the Rajasthan Royals. I feel it's long overdue. In the longer term, my focus has always been on growth and reliability. I want to establish myself as a consistent, bankable wicketkeeper-batsman, whether it's in the IPL or in the blue jersey. I want the team management to have the confidence that I can deliver whenever and wherever needed off me. You can ask me to open, finish, or keep for 100 overs, I won't blink," he offered.

LOVE FOR TEST CRICKET

"Red-ball cricket is like a game of chess. I love the format. Test cricket is the real test of your character. I have learned that patience is more important than speed, and you need to be in-the-game all through the five days. It's tough to maintain that focus. Winning a Test match for India provides a sense of fulfilling a duty, that's why I felt like dedicating my maiden Test century to the Indian Army, in honour of the real heroes," said Jurel.

Focus on Smriti & Deepti in 3rd T20I

Johannesburg: Vice-captain **Smriti Mandhana** and senior all-rounder Deepti Sharma would like to bring out their respective 'A' games with the Indian women's team trying to pulls all its stops to get back to winning ways against South Africa in the third T20I here on Wednesday.

The Proteas women lead the series 2-0 and would like to complete the series win in the third match at the Bull Ring.

Smriti scored 13 and 12 in the first two games in which India put up an underwhelming show with totals of 157 and 147. As far as Deepti is concerned, her form has been more worrisome. She was demoted to No. 9 in the first game where she remained not out on 1 and was dismissed for identical score in the second game where she was sent up the order at No. 6. In both games, she went wicketless.

The Indian batting is very much dependent on Smriti's free flowing starts and the stylish southpaw would like to make amends for the poor returns in the first two games. Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues did get some runs in the first match but came a cropper in the second outing.

With T20 World Cup in England only a couple of months away, Harmanpreet and her team would like to get its mojo back and notch up a few victories which is essential to boost the morale of the team.

For the Proteas, skipper Laura Wolvaardt has once again proved to be a thorn in the flesh for India with back-to-back half-centuries (51 and 54) and Sune Luus scoring a 57 in the second game. PTI

Live, 9.30 pm, JioHotstar

SNAP SHOTS

WORLD BODY REVOKES VFI'S RECOGNITION

World volleyball body FIVB on Tuesday revoked Volleyball Federation of India's recognition with immediate effect for breach of "legal and administrative requirements", days after two senior players quit the national camp over "poor and unscientific facilities" and "politics" in selection. "The legal and administrative requirements established by the FIVB have not been respected by the interim leadership of the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI)," the world body said in a statement. "As such, the VFI's provisional recognition has been revoked with immediate effect." The FIVB said the welfare and support of athletes remains its top priority, and to this end, the Steering Committee has been mandated to ensure continuity, stability and proper governance during the transitional period.

Leicester fairytale turns sour: Ten years after authoring the ultimate sporting fairytale, former Premier League champions Leicester are on the brink of a humiliating relegation to the third tier. If Gary Rowett's side fail to beat Hull on Tuesday, they will be condemned to League One for only the second time in their history. It would be a third relegation in four seasons for Leicester, who dropped out of the Premier League in 2023 and 2025.

Hudson-Odoi to miss rest of season: Nottingham Forest winger Callum Hudson-Odoi will miss the remainder of the season after undergoing surgery on a thigh muscle injury, the Premier League club said on Tuesday. "Nottingham Forest can confirm that Callum Hudson-Odoi suffered an injury to his right quadriceps muscle," the club said in a statement.

Brady steps down: Karren Brady, who blazed a trail for women executives in English football, has stepped down as vice-chair of Premier League strugglers West Ham, bringing down the curtain on her 16 years at the club. Her decision also ends a long association with West Ham co-owner David Sullivan, which dates back to when she persuaded him and the late David Gold to buy Birmingham City in 1993.

Timberwolves stun Nuggets: Anthony Edwards scored 30 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves staged a double-digit fightback for a series-levelling 119-114 upset of the Denver Nuggets in the NBA playoffs on Monday.
Results: Cleveland 115 bt Toronto 105, Atlanta 107 bt New York 106, Minnesota 119 bt Denver 114.

Tushar, Mannat share lead: Young golfers Tushar Pannu and Mannat Brar turned in a matching six-under 67 to share the lead after the opening day of the Invitational Congo in Lubumbashi. Sukhman Singh shot 5-under 68, to lie sole third. Aman Raj shared the fourth place with Harendra Gupta, as they both shot 4-under 69. Udayan Mane was tied for sixth.

ALCARAZ AWAITS FRENCH OPEN FATE

Cast On Wrist At Laureus Red Carpet Puts Focus Back On Tennis Star's Injury As Roland Garros Looms

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Getty Images

Alcaraz addresses the media in Madrid

> Pushing myself too hard at this French Open could seriously hurt my chances in future tournaments.
>
> I prefer to come back a little later and in good shape, rather than earlier and in bad shape."
>
> —Carlos Alcaraz

Madrid: When Carlos Alcaraz stepped onto the red carpet at the Laureus World Sports Awards, he looked every bit the global superstar. Dressed in a sharp black tuxedo and flashing his trademark infectious smile, the 22-year-old Spaniard appeared relaxed and confident among the world's sporting elite. Yet, one small detail captured the attention of everyone present — a green cast wrapped around his right wrist, peeking out from under his sleeve.

That image immediately sparked concern. For a player at the peak of his powers, any sign of injury carries significant weight, especially with the clay-court season in full swing. The wrist injury forced him to retire from the Barcelona Open and withdraw from the Madrid Open, a key stop before the French Open starting May 24. Now, doubts are growing whether he will be able to defend his Roland Garros title — the one he claimed in memorable fashion last year against rival Jannik Sinner.

Speaking after being named 'Sportsman of the Year' at the Laureus ceremony, Alcaraz did little to quell those fears. Instead, he offered a detailed update. "I have a very long career ahead of me, many years of good tennis," he said. "Pushing myself too hard at this French Open could seriously hurt my chances in future tournaments. I prefer to come back a little later and in good shape, rather than earlier and in bad shape," added Alcaraz, clearly thinking long-term.

The possibility of skipping not just the French Open but the entire clay season is now firmly on the table. That would also include the Italian Open, sandwiched between Madrid and Paris. For now, everything hinges on medical tests.

Alcaraz confirmed that further evaluations will determine both the severity of the injury and the next steps in his recovery. "The next test will be crucial. I am trying to be very patient. We have a few tests in the next few days and then we'll see how the injury is and what the next steps will be," he explained.

Alcaraz emphasised the importance of patience and proper recovery. "In professional sport, you always encounter small setbacks," he said. "But our obligation is to come back stronger. Right now, the main thing is to recover, train well and get back to competing. We'll try to take the best possible care of ourselves now so we can return as soon as possible. I don't know, I can't say anything right now."

With Wimbledon looming in June and July, Alcaraz hinted that preserving his fitness for the grass-court season could take precedence over defending his clay crown.

Alcaraz was also asked about his great generational rivalry with Jannik Sinner. The Italian star was also present at the awards ceremony, applauding Alcaraz as he accepted his honour. Their on-court battles have quickly become one of tennis's defining storylines, with both players trading the World No. 1 ranking in recent months.

"I'm not worried about the fight for No. 1. We're sharing the weeks and it's very exciting. I already said in Monte Carlo, when I was healthy and injury-free, that I was going to lose the No. 1 spot any way. He might hold it a bit longer now, but our careers are long. We'll have many opportunities," Alcaraz said.

For Alcaraz, the immediate goal is not rankings but recovery.

(The correspondent is in Madrid as a guest of Laureus World Sports Awards)

'Hope to achieve half of what Messi did'

WANT TO FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS: YAMAL

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Madrid: At just 18 years of age, Lamine Yamal is already being spoken of as football's next global superstar, though his feet remain firmly on the ground. The Rocafonda-born winger, raised just outside Barcelona, has enjoyed a meteoric rise with FC Barcelona, playing a pivotal role in a remarkable 2025 season that saw the club secure La Liga, the Spanish Super Cup, and the Copa del Rey, alongside a deep run in the UEFA Champions League.

> I've always imagined playing in a World Cup, seeing my mother in the stands, representing my country. I hope we can win it."
>
> — LAMINE YAMAL

Such success has inevitably drawn comparisons to Lionel Messi, the iconic figure who defined an era at Barcelona across 21 years. Yet Yamal has been quick in rejecting those parallels. For him, Messi is untouchable.

Speaking after receiving his second successive honour at the Laureus World Sports Awards, this time as 'World Young Sportsperson of the Year', Yamal expressed deep humility.

"For me, Messi is the greatest football player in history. I hope I can follow in his footsteps but I'd already be grateful to achieve even half of what he has.

"He is a legend and I don't find myself worthy compared with him. I only hope to achieve half of what he has done, he is without a doubt the best in the history of football," he said.

"When you realise an athlete isn't just a legend of their sport but of all sports... Messi, who for me is the best player in history, and if he isn't the greatest athlete ever, he's definitely in that conversation with all of them. He's more than an idol. I think everyone respects him for everything he's done. He's been part of the childhood of every kid when we played in the park or at school and I hope I'll be able to follow in his footsteps," added Yamal.

Despite the accolades, Yamal is acutely aware of the responsibility that comes with fame at such a young age. "It's hard to realise you are a role model and that you can't make mistakes," he admitted,

"But I see it as something positive. Whenever I send a message, I try to make it meaningful and helpful."

Yamal embraced the evolving relationship between players and fans on social media. "People are entertained by what you do off the pitch too and I like this change. This has strengthened my bond with fans."

Yamal's ambitions remain clear to fulfill his childhood dream of playing in the World Cup this summer. "I've always imagined playing in a World Cup, seeing my mother in the stands, representing my country. I hope we can win it," he said.

A WELL-EARNED POINT FOR MD SPORTING

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Chennai: After all they have been through this season, Mohammedan Sporting will head home satisfied with a 0-0 draw against Chennaiyin FC in the Indian Super League at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Tuesday. A single point did not do much to their position as relegation-threatened Md Sporting remained last in the table with two points from nine matches, while CFC are ninth with nine points.

ISL

Chennaiyin started strongly but Md Sporting grew into the game with a sustained spell of attack after the 20-minute mark. It began with a series of three corners, the last of which saw Makan Chothe whip in a curling cross from the left towards an unmarked Hira Mondal. At the far post, the defender stretched to guide the ball goalward but goalkeeper Mohammed Nawaz produced a fingertip save to deny the effort.

Nawaz came to Chennaiyin's rescue on a couple of occasions and kept the score board in check. Meanwhile, despite creating chances, CFC lacked the finishing touch in the final third.

In the second half, Chennaiyin attempted to build from the back but Md Sporting stood firm with a well-organised back four. Midfielder Alberto Noguera dropped deep, which limited his creative influence. CFC coach Clifford Miranda turned to his bench, bringing on fresh legs Inigo Martin and 'local lad' S. Prakadeswaran, yet the home side struggled to break through.

WOLVES RELEGATED AFTER CRYSTAL PALACE AND WEST HAM DRAW

London: West Ham drew 0-0 at Crystal Palace on Monday, gaining an important point in their fight to avoid relegation and ensuring the demise of the Premier League's bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers.

EPL

Wolves are now 16 points behind fourth-bottom West Ham, with a maximum of 15 available from their last five matches. Wolves cannot avoid the drop and return to the Championship for the first time since 2018. Relegation looked inevitable for the Midlands club for most of a woeful season but even a string of more encouraging performances over the last couple of months could not save them. The end came far from home in a listless match in south London. West Ham had the better of the opening exchanges but the scoreline remained goalless at halftime.

Although Palace perked up in the second half, they did not create many chances.

The point was nevertheless welcomed by the Hammers, who moved two clear of Tottenham Hotspur in 18th place. AFP

I HOPE GOUT GOUT HAS THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GUIDE HIM, SAYS BOLT

Melbourne: Usain Bolt said Australian sprint sensation **Gout Gout** must surround himself with a strong support team in order to stay focused on his nascent career.

Gout has earned comparisons with the Jamaican sprinting great and the 18-year-old is already being talked about in Australia as a potential gold medallist when Brisbane hosts the Olympics in 2032.

"At that young age, because I was there, you start getting put left and right and then you forget track and field," eight-times Olympic gold medallist Bolt told CNN. "Hopefully he has the right set of people to guide him and keep him focused on track and field because the rest of the stuff will always be there."

Bolt clocked 19.67s to win the 200m title at the Australian Athletics meet this month and followed it up with a victory in the under-20 100m event in which he finished in 10.21s.

Bolt holds the world record in the 200m (19.19s) and the 100m (9.58s). AGENCIES

Dean-Gagan set for WRC debut

Mangaluru-Kodagu Pair Target Experience & Growth in Rally Islas Canarias

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GIANT LEAP: Dean Mascarenhas (right) and Gagan Karumbaiah

Bengaluru: From India's national rally circuit to the asphalt stages of Gran Canaria, Dean Mascarenhas and Gagan Karumbaiah are about to take the biggest leap of their careers.

The Team TSI Racing duo will make their FIA World Rally Championship debut in the WRC3 class at Rally Islas Canarias on Thursday. The rally will feature 18 special stages over 301.30km — a demanding surface that will test not just speed, but precision, patience and adaptability.

MOTORSPORT

"This puts India on the map at the WRC. It's opened the doors for youngsters back home," Dean said, reflecting on the impact on Indian motorsport.

For Dean, this is the culmination of a career built on persistence. A veteran of Indian rallying since his debut at the K1000 in 2010, he has spent more than a decade climbing through the ranks, collecting podiums, runner-up finishes and titles across multiple classes. His breakthrough came in 2025, when he won the INRC Overall Driver's Championship after a season of remarkable consistency.

Dean and Gagan are not just taking a shot at international competition; they are stepping into it with a clear understanding of the scale of the challenge. "Our journey has been good, and a lot of things have fallen into place," Dean said. "It's not just about going out there and driving — a lot of effort has gone into it with an entire team working behind us," the 32-year-old added.

Gagan's path has been different, but no less compelling. With roots in 4x4 off-roading, autocross and even rally driving, he developed a rare breadth of motorsport experience before settling into the co-driver's seat. His methodical approach and composure under pressure have made him an ideal partner for Dean, and their bond has only strengthened since they began competing together in 2019.

Now, the focus has shifted to mastering the details that matter most at the world level. The Mangaluru-Kodagu pair has been training in Spain, refining their pace notes, adjusting to the demands of the new car. "The grind never stops," Dean said. "Wherever we drive, we have to keep practicing. We've been working on our pace notes and understanding and practicing with the new car."

Gagan echoed that emphasis on precision. "Pace notes are the key," he said. "If you are thorough with the pace note, the speed, what you carry and the approach towards the corner, it will take you to the next level."

For Dean, the maiden outing is about learning rather than making bold predictions. "The idea is to learn," he said. "You can't go out at the topmost level of rallying and say that you're going to be the best out there. It's not possible because there are a lot of people who have been doing this for years."

Dean and Gagan, who are skipping the INRC this year, know they are entering unfamiliar territory. "We need to learn, adapt and progress," Dean said. "We can't keep competing only back home."

For Dean and Gagan, Rally Islas Canarias is more than just a debut — it is a statement of intent.

F1 refines engines ahead of Miami

Getty Images

Image for representation

London: Formula One teams and stakeholders agreed unanimously on Monday to engine rule tweaks aimed at improving the racing and driver safety from the next race in Miami on May 3.

The sport this season started a new era, with the hybrid power units now split roughly 50-50 between electric and combustion power.

Some drivers have complained over the first three races about having to 'lift and coast' into high-speed corners so the combustion engine can recharge the battery, and have aired safety concerns regarding the start and speed differentials during the race.

FORMULA ONE

They have also had to contend with 'super-clipping' where the power unit automatically diverts energy from the engine to the battery, slowing down the car even if the driver is flat on the throttle. Red Bull's four-times world champion Max Verstappen has questioned his future in the sport.

The governing International Automobile Federation (FIA) said in a statement that an online meeting with the 11 team bosses, power unit CEOs and Formula One had agreed a number of in-season "refinements" that would now be put to a virtual vote.

"The proposals agreed today... will be implemented from Miami apart from the race start changes that will be tested in Miami and adopted following feedback and analysis," it said.

The FIA said energy management parameters would be adjusted for qualifying, a key area of concern, with a reduction in maximum permitted recharge from eight megajoules to seven to encourage more consistent flat-out driving and peak 'superclip' power increased from 250kW to 350kW to reduce the time spent recharging. REUTERS

'Only mental pressure between us & medal'

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New Delhi: When it comes to Indian archery, **Rahul Banerjee** is a name that has long commanded respect. A seasoned campaigner and Olympian, Banerjee, who represented India at the 2012 London Olympics has now transitioned seamlessly into shaping the next generation of elite archers.

Archery, it seems, runs in Rahul's family. His sister, Dola Banerjee, is a decorated international archer, and together they have represented the nation at the top level for a number of years. But the recurve archer's journey has taken a decisive turn, from chasing medals to building minds. The defining moment of his competitive career came at the 2010 Commonwealth Games, where he became the first Indian archer to clinch a gold medal at the event. Years later, the focus has shifted from personal glory to giving back.

ARCHERY

Now coaching some of India's finest, including Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das, Banerjee is intent on addressing what he believes is the final hurdle for Indian archery on the global stage.

"Archery is a mental game," Banerjee said, watching closely as Deepika prepared for her gold medal match at the National Ranking Archery Championship in New Delhi on Saturday which was a crucial event for Deepika and her coach Rahul as they look to fine tune ahead of the Asian Games qualification event. "At the level Indian archery is today, the only thing stopping us from winning bigger medals, like at the Olympics, is mental pressure."

For Banerjee, the solution lies not just in technique but in clarity of process. "It's easy to say 'mental training', but what does that mean? First, we must know exactly what our shooting form is, what we need to execute. That's where we started by refining the basics."

Siddanth does the trick for Bombers HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Riding on skipper Siddanth's hat-trick, Bombers Hockey Club registered a 4-2 win over East India Hockey Club in the KSHA 'A' division hockey league championship here on Tuesday. Arun and Kaif's late goals raised hopes of a comeback for East India, but despite a few promising chances in the closing stages, they were unable to convert and sustain the momentum.

HOCKEY

In the first half, the possession was equally split, but two minutes before half-time, Siddanth converted a penalty corner to put his team ahead. He converted two more penalty corners in the 33rd and 37th minutes with impressive control and precision to put Bombers ahead by a 3-0 margin.

East India staged a comeback with two quick strikes from Arun N and Kaif. But with Naeem stretching the lead to 4-2 in the 48th minute and East India failing to find more goals, Bombers walked home as winners.

Result: Bombers Hockey Club 4 (Siddanth 28, 33, 37, Naeem 48) bt East India Hockey Club 2 (Arun N 40, Kaif 42). **Today's matches:** HMT Sports Club vs Bangalore United Hockey Club (1.15 pm); East India Hockey Club vs Coorg Hockey Association (2.45 pm).

—Kaushal V Kumar

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Sandilya, Nidi in quarters

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Two upsets marked the second day of the TNR Memorial AITA tennis tournament in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Sandilya P eased past fifth seed Nithilan 6-0, 6-3, to enter the men's singles quarterfinals. In the women's singles, Nidi stunned third seed Bharathiyana Babu 4-6, 7-6 (0), 6-4, for a place in the last eight.

CITY ROUND-UP

Results (pre-quarters): Singles: Men: Prakash Sarran bt KS Kavin Karthik 6-3, 6-4; Vishal Vasudev bt Hitesh Y 4-6, 6-1, 6-3; Gandharv Gaurav bt Hasan Md 6-3, 6-1; Soma Suhas bt Kandhavel Mahalingam 6-4, 6-1; Manish Ganesh bt GP Balasurya 6-1, 3-0 (retd); Aadhitya SM bt Pranav Mahesh 4-6, 6-3, 6-1; Sandilya P bt Nithilan K 6-0, 6-3; A Deepak bt Likith Gowda 6-3, 6-3. **Women:** Hrideshi B Pai bt Dhavni Kaul 6-2, 6-3; Ananya Jain bt Hera V 6-0, 6-0; Nidi Burial Srinivas bt Bharathiyana Babu 4-6, 7-6 (0), 6-4; Saiyette Varadkar bt T Hamsika 6-0, 6-1; SR Ananya bt Reet Jhawar 6-2, 3-6, 6-4; Sonicka Jagdeeh bt Dhanashree Patil 6-1, 5-7, 6-4; Shreeniti Chowdary bt Sayesha Taneja 6-2, 6-2; Meghana GD bt Yahana Arora 6-1, 6-2.

Parikrma cruise: Parikrma FC cruised to a 5-1 win over Sree Renuka FC in the KSFA 'A' Division Women's League Championship in Bengaluru on Tuesday. While Sonam Datta and Arti Munda scored a brace each, Jamuna netted the lone goal for Parikrma.

Results: Parikrma FC 5 (Jamuna 1, Sonam Datta 6, 58, Arti Munda 34, 70+3) bt Sree Renuka FC 1 (Sakshi Ganesh Chitagi 14); Kemp Juniors 1 (T Steffi 48) bt Pass FC Sparks 0.

Basketball tourney: The Karnataka State Basketball Association will conduct the State Sub-Junior Basketball Championship for boys and girls at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium courts in Bengaluru from April 24 to May 1. The matches will be played on a league-cum-super league basis.

Bangalore Star CA clinch big victory

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Bangalore Star Cricket Association rode on a fine all-round show to register a 200-run win against Cavaliers Cricket Club in the KSCA U-16 inter-club tournament here recently.

Batting first, Bangalore Star piled up 305/8, courtesy of openers Suhas (100) and Karmanye Puri (93). In reply, the Cavaliers folded up for 105 in 24.2 overs. Opting to bat, Bangalore Stars raised 202 runs for the opening stand.

Suhas's century came off 78 deliveries and included 15 hits to the fence and three over. Karmanye, in contrast, played a patient 108-ball knock with 13 boundaries.

Once Abhay Chavan (2/60) broke the partnership in the 30th over, none of the other batters made an impact. In reply, the Cavaliers were undone by Hridhaanreet Singh, who cleaned up the top order within 11 overs. Hridhaanreet returned figures of 5 for 34, while V Vedhanth took 4 for 8.

Brief scores: Bangalore Star CA: 305/8 in 49 overs (Suhas M 100, Karmanye Puri 93, Hridhaanreet Singh 28; Samarth Warad 3-50, Abhay Chavan 2-60) bt **Cavaliers CC: 105 in 24.2 overs** (Yashas Adiga 26, Hridhaanreet 5-34, V Vedhanth 4-8).

Visweswarampuram CC (2): 121 in 29.5 overs (Dakshath Gowda 33, Samar Veer Vinod 31; Aarav Singh 2-8, Parinith K 5-17) lost to **Vultures CC: 122/2 in 17 overs** (Anirudh Bangera 39, Aaryan Nagesh 69 n.o; Pradyumna Boyapati 2-27).

South End SC: 143 in 32.3 overs (Umar Ahil 39; Haadi Khan 4-54, Lukesh D 3-23) bt **Modern CC: 144/2 in 23.4 overs** (Den Nachappa 57, Aarin Sen 28, Suriyha M 40 n.o).

Vijaya CC: 272/9 in 50 overs (Panshul Sharma 101 (138b; 13x4,1x6), Ahaan Dash 51, Yuvaan Porwal 31; Vedanth Vedanarayanan 2-60, Bhuvan Gowda 4-36) bt **Century Cricketers: 92 in 29 overs** (Vedanth 31; Khrishay Reddy 2-22, Yuvaan 4-24, Prayag Bijesh 3-4).

Jolly Cricketers: 110 in 37.4 overs (Yathin Gowda 42; Siddharth Kona 5-17, Vivaan Balani 4-29) lost to **Visweswarapuram CC (1): 113 for no loss in 7.4 overs** (Sanjit Sathish 53 n.o, Advay Choudhary 54 n.o).

Young Lions Club: 285 in 46.5 overs (Deekshith Gowda 33, Shivaraj R 125 (92b; 19x4), Sagar H S 25; CVD Karthik 2-45, Tanay Jabin 5-47) bt **Malleswaram Gymkhana: 120 in 32.2 overs** (Aryamohan K 37; Arjun Bharadwaj 2-33, Usman Shareef 5-40).

Swastic Union CC (2): 236 in 49.4 overs (Bryan Thomas 62, Hannan Ahmad 79, Siddharth Hiremath 33; Aaryansinh Chavda 2-48, Shravanth Gowda 4-50, Rohan Gowda 2-28) bt **Friends Union CC (1): 130 in 36.4 overs** (Aaryansinh 47; Vivek Seervi 2-19, Ashith Sanjay 2-22, Krishna Sreekar 2-38, Reyes Raj 2-4).

Dooravani Cricketers (1): 183/9 in 50 overs (Ayaan Waheed 55, Sampath Kumar 36, Datta Samrudh S 25; Atharv Kabugade 2-35, Aadyanth 3-30) lost to **Blue Diamond: 184/4 in 35.3 overs** (Nischal Gowda 35, Tambrahalli Samanyu 64, Chetas H 56 n.o; Raghavan Krishnakumar 2-44).

Vijaya CC, Malur: 125 in 47.1 overs (Abhaychandra Kallapura 48; Tanish Benmuri 2-30) lost to **Spartons SC: 127 for no loss in 16.3 overs** (Ryan Tomar 54 n.o, Vastvik Sharma 62 n.o).

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THE TIMES

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SANAE TAKAICHI-LED JAPAN SCRAPS BAN ON LETHAL WEAPONS EXPORTS, FURTHER DILUTING ITS POST-WORLD WAR II PACIFIST POLICY 16

13 killed in Kerala cracker unit explosion

Thrissur: At least 13 people were killed and as many injured in a major explosion on Tuesday at a fireworks manufacturing unit in Mundathikode of Kerala's Thrissur district, **reports Ramavarman T**. Five of the injured are critical with over 70% burns, officials said.

Around 40 people — women, elderly and youngsters — are believed to have been present in the sheds where crackers were being made at the time of the explosion. The unit was manufacturing crackers for one of the events in the Thrissur Pooram festival starting Sunday.

The tragedy comes just two days after an explosion killed 23 workers at a firecracker factory in Virudhunagar in TN — part of India's main fireworks manufacturing belt around Sivakasi.

▶ Ops hit for 3 hours, P 12

Judge: Non-believer has no right to challenge customs

Observation During Sabarimala Case Hearing

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
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New Delhi: Justice **BV Nagarathna**, part of the CJI Surya Kant-led nine-judge Supreme Court bench hearing the core issue of 'fundamental rights vs faith and belief', on Tuesday observed that a person, who doesn't believe in a particular religion and its religious practices or customs, had no right to file petitions challenging their validity.

As senior advocate V Giri, appearing for the Sabarimala Ayyappa Thanthri, argued that no devotee can act in derogation of practices attached to the 'Naishtik Brahmachari' (eternal celibacy) attributes of Lord Ayyappa, Justice Nagarathna said, "A non-believer has no business to question customs or beliefs associated with a temple and its deity."

She said why should the court, once it has distinguished a religious practice from secular activities of a regular institution, delve into whether the practice in question is an essential part of religion or religious denomination, thus disagreeing with the 2018 SC judgment that struck down the custom barring entry of women in the 10-50 year age group into the Sabarimala temple, terming it as not an essential religious practice.

▶Based on faith, P 7

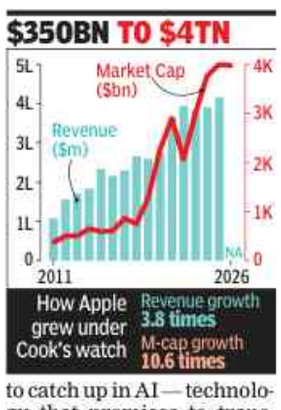
IN THE COURTS

- **A woman in MP comes to know of her husband's death 8 months** after wheeling him into Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College after filing habeas corpus plea
- **Sanjay Pathak**, BJP MLA in Katni facing criminal contempt proceedings, **appears before MP HC division bench, tenders an unconditional apology for calling up HC Justice** Vishal Mishra, who was hearing a case of illegal mining against Pathak's kin | Inside flap
- **Court acquits a man of abetment to his wife's suicide**, setting aside a Ballia court's judgment that awarded him five-year jail in 1982 | P 5

Apple CEO Tim Cook to hand over reins to Ternus

Apple Inc CEO Tim Cook will hand over the reins to hardware boss John Ternus later this year, capping a 15-year tenure that turned the company into a business worth $4 trillion.

Ternus (50) will become CEO on Sept 1, when Cook will transition to executive chairman. Ternus, who has served as head of hardware engineering since 2021, must now chart a new path for the Silicon Valley company at a challenging moment. Though Apple's growth remains strong, the company has struggled to catch up in AI — technology that promises to transform the way consumers use devices. BLOOMBERG



▶ Strong believer in AI, P 17

Idol recovered at KIA was stolen Nepal 9th-C antique

Nithya.Mandyam
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: The interception of a consignment declared as a 'grey stone stele (a stone slab with inscription) of Padmapani' by the Air Cargo Commissionerate at Bengaluru airport five months ago has now taken a dramatic turn, with investigations revealing that the idol is in fact a ninth-century antiquity stolen from Nepal.

The artefact was seized from a traveller from UK

The case began last Nov when a 32-year-old traveller arriving from the UK was questioned by airport authorities after bringing in the consignment, which had been imported from Vienna, Austria. The traveller claimed it was purchased at an auction, but officials grew suspicious about its origin.

During inspection, officials noted the sculpture's intricate craftsmanship and suspected it was of historical significance rather than a mere decorative item. The artefact was sent to ASI, which confirmed it as a ninth-century sculpture.

▶Nepal confirms, P 4

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India, Korea agree to broaden phase-3 defence cooperation

After K9 Howitzers, Both Eye Tie-Ups In Anti-Aircraft, Missile Systems

Surendra.Singh
@timesofindia.com

IANS
South Korean president Lee Jae Myung (R) making a toast with Indian President Droupadi Murmu during a state banquet, in New Delhi, Monday

New Delhi: India and South Korea have agreed to broaden their defence partnership during the bilateral talks between PM Narendra Modi and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Monday, as the two countries have planned for the third phase of cooperation that will emphasise greater technology transfer, co-development and joint design of advanced military systems.

The two sides already co-manufacture the K9 Vajra, a specialised artillery gun, and now plan to extend the same manufacturing model to futuristic technologies.

Addressing a media briefing in Delhi, MEA secretary (East) P Kumaran said on Monday, "Korea supplies K9 Vajra systems, anti-aircraft systems. There are already two phases of supplies that have happened. We're looking at the third phase, which involves a greater technology transfer. We're also looking at other kinds of anti-aircraft guns and missile systems."

The K9 Vajra-T is a 155 mm, 52-calibre tracked self-propelled howitzer that forms a key component of the Indian Army's modern artillery capability. Manufactured in India by Larsen & Toubro with technology transferred from South Korea's Hanwha Aerospace, the system is based on the widely used K9 Thunder platform.

Equipped with a 155mm/52 calibre gun mounted on a 50-tonne chassis with all-welded steel armour up to 19 mm thick, K9 Vajra-T self-propelled howitzers can fire 47 kg shells at distances of up to around 50 km. The Army has successfully deployed K9 Vajra-T in high-altitude, mountainous terrain, specifically in Ladakh and the northeastern border. These 155mm/52-calibre tracked guns were originally designed for desert warfare but after successful trials in 2021, are now operationalised in hilly areas to enhance long-range, rapid-deployment firepower.

Kumaran said, "The earlier two phases of cooperation were primarily oriented towards direct acquisitions and progressive localisation, but Phase III will take the relationship even further with advanced manufacturing and technology transfer."

"Co-development and technology transfer, co-design, etc of next-generation defence systems are some other areas where we want to explore cooperation. Then there are possibilities of co-operation on procurement of defence hardware, telecom equipment, cyber security...," he said.

While the production of artillery weapons systems such as the K9 Vajra has been the highlight of this joint venture, there are ongoing talks on developing air defence systems, which include both anti-aircraft guns as well as missile platforms to tackle new aerial threats such as drones.

BJP MLA who phoned judge apologises for contempt in HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bhopal/Jabalpur: Sanjay Pathak, BJP MLA from Vijayraghavgarh constituency in Madhya Pradesh's Katni district and former minister, Tuesday appeared before the division bench of MP High Court (HC) headed by the Chief Justice and tendered an unconditional apology for calling up HC Justice Vishal Mishra, who was hearing a case of illegal mining against Pathak's kin.

The bench comprising CJ Sanjeev Sachdeva and Justice Vinay Saraf had ordered criminal contempt proceedings against Pathak, known as a mining baron, in response to a petition by Katni resident Ashutosh Dixit.

In his plea, Dixit submitted that Justice Mishra had disclosed in court that Pathak had tried to influence him over a phone call, following which the judge recused himself from the case in which Pathak's mother and son were parties. Dixit was the complainant in the illegal mining case as well.

Pathak told HC that he had mistakenly called Justice Mishra. The bench deferred further hearing to May 14 and directed Pathak to appear then, too.

281 out of 50k students: Only few takers for engg in Hindi

Ramendra Singh & Litha Achari | TNN

RUSHED LAUNCH OF HINDI-MEDIUM ENGG COURSE

Bhopal: MP's ambitious push for engineering study through Hindi medium is teetering, with only 281 out of 50,000 students enrolled in 150 engineering colleges across the state choosing Hindi as the medium for 2025-2026 session. These students are from just two private colleges, which, too, have limited the Hindi medium course to a single branch — computer science and engineering (CSE).

Launched amid much hype in 2022-23 with the approval of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to boost technical education in Indian languages, the Hindi engineering courses have found few takers. Not a single engineering college — govt or private — has fully embraced Hindi medium.

A senior official of govt-run Rajiv Gandhi Proudyogiki Vishwavidyalaya (RGPV), speaking anonymously, confirmed the grim reality. "CSE is the lone survivor. Admissions in other branches are a big zero," he said. RGPV had introduced Hindi medium courses, but it could not sustain beyond two years.

"No govt colleges, including RGPV-Bhopal, UIT-RGPV and SIT Shivpuri — which planned Hindi in civil, mechanical, electrical, electronics & telecom, and computer science — offered the option during counselling," said a source in the higher education department.

Educators and administrators decried the rushed launch of Hindi-medium engineering courses, warning that it could jeopardise students' future. "It's our students' careers on the line," one teacher said.

The faculty, trained via English degrees, grapple with discomfort in Hindi classrooms as it's an uncharted territory. A senior faculty member lambasted translation flaws, saying, "Rendering technical terms into Hindi bewildered everyone."

"With global tech demanding fluency in English, forcing Hindi risks sidelining students and rendering them unemployable. Without books, trained faculty and real demand — MP's linguistic experiment is bound to collapse," said a senior RGPV faculty.

Shri Govindram Seksaria Institute of Technology and Science (SGSITS) in Indore, the only engineering college to offer biomedical engineering (BME) in Hindi, had to shut the facility. Introduced in 2022, the Hindi-medium BME course failed to find takers beyond small, short-lived batches. Entire batches exited within a year, shifting to English-medium courses. In the last admission cycle, the course failed to attract even a single student.

The state govt, however, has no plans for course-correction. "It is true that admissions to Hindi-medium engineering programmes have fallen short of expectations, but we are committed to turning the tide. Efforts to boost enrolment continue unabated, with faculty directed during the latest admission cycle to actively promote these courses among students," said higher and technical education minister Inder Singh Parmar.

SGSITS will now introduce a civil engineering course in Hindi from 2026-27 session, with 30 seats.

"Engineering education in Hindi remains a firm priority and will not be discontinued under any circumstances," Parmar asserted.

After DNA report, SC rejects maintenance plea of child

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LEGITIMACY OF CHILD BORN

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Tuesday held that a child cannot be entitled to maintenance where the DNA report has confirmed that the man is not the biological father of the child.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N K Singh, however, intervened to ensure that the child is given proper care after the paternity test showed the man was not the biological father. It directed the secretary, women and child development of Delhi govt to take care of the child. It upheld the Delhi High Court order which rejected maintenance of the girl child in view of the DNA report.

The DNA test was ordered by a family court which was hearing matrimonial dispute between the estranged couple with wife demading maintenance for her and their daughter. Opposing the plea, the husband had alleged that she was not her daughter and had sought paternity test which was allowed by court.

Referring to Section 112 of the Evidence Act which presumes legitimacy of child born during marriage, the bench said when a report of a DNA test conducted on the direction of a court, was available on record and was in conflict with the presumption of conclusive proof of the legitimacy of the child, then the DNA test report cannot be ignored.

It said in such cases the husband would not be liable to pay maintenance.

Accident victim losing limb must get prosthetic cover for rest of life: SC

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that artificial limb is integral part of life of a person, who has lost limb in an accident, as it boosts confidence and self-belief, and said compensation must be awarded for such victims under the head of "Prosthetic Limb" and the amount should be sufficient to replace it after every five years and also for its maintenance charges, **reports Amit Anand Choudhary**.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and K V Viswanathan awarded a compensation of Rs 26 lakh to a driver for getting artificial leg for the rest of his life, which was overlooked by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) and Rajasthan High Court. The compensation amount paid by SC was around Rs 50 lakh, while the HC had granted only Rs 13 lakh.

"For amputees, a prosthetic limb would get them closest to the life experienced, before the onset of their disability. The device, apart from empowering them, is integral to their life, giving them confidence and self-belief. The appliance is so personal to the individual that its indispensability can only be better appreciated by the person disabled," Justice Viswanathan, who penned the judgment for the bench, said.

"Most importantly, this court also laid down that henceforth whenever a claim for grant of aid under the head of prosthetic limb is filed the same shall be accompanied with requisite quotations from at least two or three service providers enabling the tribunal to make an informed assessment. We reiterate the said holding," the bench said.

Court rejects father's plea for child's DNA test in adultery row

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Dehradun: Uttarakhand high court has upheld a family court order rejecting a husband's request for DNA examination of a minor child in a matrimonial dispute, holding that such a direction cannot be granted routinely and that the law strongly protects the legitimacy, dignity and privacy of a child born during a valid marriage. A division bench of Justice Manoj Kumar Tiwari and Justice Pankaj Purohit dismissed the appeal, saying the appellant had failed to lay the legal foundation required for DNA testing and that the balance of interests clearly favoured protection of the child's rights.

The appeal was filed by a Nainital resident against an order dated Dec 16, 2025, passed by the principal judge, family court, Nainital. In proceedings under section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, the husband had alleged matrimonial misconduct, including adultery, against his wife and, during the pendency of the case, moved an application seeking DNA examination of the minor child to support the allegation.

The appellant's counsel argued that family court had misunderstood the purpose of the application.

"The husband is not seeking any declaration on the child's paternity and does not intend to disturb the child's legal status," he argued, adding that the request was limited to obtaining scientific evidence to substantiate the plea of adultery, particularly when direct evidence was rarely available in such cases. He relied on SC decisions in Dipawita Roy vs Ronobroto Roy and Ivan Rathinam vs Milan Joseph.

HC held that the governing position under section 112 of the Indian Evidence Act remained decisive.